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Chairman: Mr. Chowdhury ..... (Bangladesh)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

Contents

Agenda item 118: Joint Inspection Unit (*continued*)

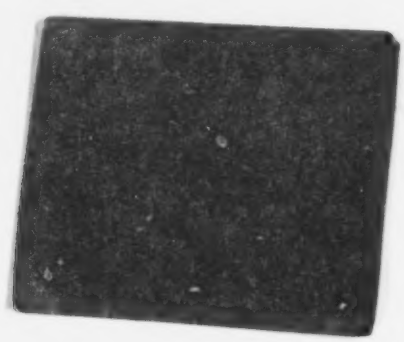
Agenda item 116: Proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 (*continued*)

Section 1. Overall policy-making, direction and coordination (*continued*)

Section 2. Political affairs

Section 3. Peacekeeping operations and special missions

Section 4. Peaceful uses of outer space



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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 118: Joint Inspection Unit (*continued*) (A/51/34, A/51/559 and Corr.1; A/52/34, A/52/206 and A/52/267)

1. **Mr. Othman** (Chairman of the Joint Inspection Unit) responding to points raised earlier by members of the Committee, said that he welcomed the comments and suggestions that had been made and was happy to note the Committee's recognition of the work of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU). The encouragement given by the Committee would help JIU to have a greater impact in the future. The comments concerning the need for effective oversight and therefore a stronger JIU were particularly appreciated, although in its report the previous year (A/51/34) the Unit had put the point differently: the need for better use and management of the available resources. Mindful of the financial constraints and the proposed reforms, the Unit had not asked for additional budgetary resources. However, it noted the view of some delegations that such negative budget growth must not be allowed to impair the Unit's work. In fact, there had been no increase in the JIU budget for the past decade or so. It hoped to rationalize its activities further in the future and to recruit better quality personnel.

2. Several Member States had taken an interest in the JIU work programme and its priorities for the current and next cycles. It would be concentrating on managerial, administrative and operational issues, but the work programme was flexible and could respond to the changing needs of the Member States and the participating organizations. The reporting cycle had been changed from January-December to July-June, and the time-frame was affected by the nature of the report: a report on a single organization might take only two months, while a system-wide report might take more than a year. It should also be noted that an inspector might be working on several reports at once.

3. On the question of the possible overlapping of the reports on the use of experts and consultants in the United Nations system and on the use of private management consulting firms, he pointed out that they were different in scope and focus. The former was geared to examining current policies and procedures for individual experts, while the latter dealt specifically with consultation on management issues and whether oversight machinery could help the Secretariat in its managerial tasks.

4. It had been suggested that the Unit might produce fewer reports. In theory, fewer reports would produce a greater impact and facilitate more detailed consideration by the Member States; on the other hand, fewer reports would seem to cost more. It had also been suggested that, since the JIU item was taken up biennially, its reports and work programme should be produced on a biennial basis. It must be remembered, however, that JIU was also responsible to the other participating organizations, which considered the item annually. It was for the Committee to take a decision on that point.

5. He could not add much concerning the Unit's inspectors and leadership in response to the question about the quality of its personnel and the skills required: it was up to the Member States to nominate and choose good inspectors. Furthermore, the statute of JIU invested its leadership with very limited discretionary authority. Its secretariat did need good research officers, in other words persons with a thorough understanding of the United Nations system, capable of carrying out research and analysis, familiar with the oversight literature, and having good technical skills, including a command of information technology. Members of the Committee had commented on the reader-friendliness of the reports, which had been produced by the Unit's skilled young research officers. It was also important for research officers not to limit themselves to information available within the United Nations system, but to go outside the system. The symposium at Montreux, for example, had been attended by representatives of all the participating organizations and of the private sector, and there had been a lively discussion on ways in which internal and external oversight services could help each other. On the specific question of skills, JIU needed a core staff but also called in short-term specialists as needed for specific topics. That issue tied in with the question of using extrabudgetary resources for dealing with certain topics.

6. The Unit did not have a problem with the recruitment of junior officers; it had recently recruited three, on the basis of its own screening, with excellent results. The problem was with the more senior Professional staff: some of them were not up to the job, but it would be difficult to replace them. JIU could recruit system-wide but such an approach met with practical difficulties.

7. Several delegations had raised questions about the use of information technology. In 1995 no inspector had had a computer workstation; now all the staff had workstations, and most of the inspectors were becoming skilled in information technology. JIU was negotiating, for example, with the International Computing Centre about going on-line with the other participating organizations. Such a move was not included in the budget proposal for the next biennium,

but the potential benefits would outweigh the costs. The Unit also had four General Service research assistants/information officers, whose function was to assist the inspectors and research officers. The quality of such staff needed to be upgraded so that the Unit would be less dependent on information supplied by the participating organizations and thus ease the burden on their secretariats. The transfer of staff from administrative to research activities would also help in that respect, once the computerized tracking system was in place. That exercise was an evolving one which required further refinement.

8. The standards and guidelines described in annex I of the 1996 report (A/51/34) had not been conceived in a vacuum but reflected the Unit's accumulated experience and the literature on the topic. Their application depended on the phase of the work: they were fully applied in the planning stage and during the preparation of the reports, but less fully during the inspections themselves when the topic in question and the persons with which the Unit was dealing had a considerable influence. In future the application of the standards and guidelines would be improved by means of internal controls in the Unit itself.

9. On the question of the United Nations Logistics Base at Brindisi, he said that JIU was entitled to comment on the reports of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) in accordance with resolution 48/218 E. The participating organizations also had internal oversight units, and JIU had made recommendations on them in the past in accordance with its mandate. The Unit had taken a broader approach to the Brindisi Base than OIOS and had linked it with the issues of the downsizing and closure of peacekeeping operations, since all the equipment at the Brindisi Base resulted from such downsizing and closures. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations also had an overall responsibility for the management of the Brindisi Base and the downsizing and closure of missions. JIU had asked a number of questions and had, in particular, sought clarification from the Secretariat about the measures apparently already taken in response to the recommendations of OIOS. The latter had itself expressed appreciation of the Unit's comments.

10. As to what JIU could do and what the Committee could do to increase the effectiveness of the oversight machinery, he hoped that it was apparent from the JIU reports and its programme of work, which had received favourable comment from many members of the Committee, that it had indeed tried to fulfil its part of the shared oversight responsibility. It could, of course, do better even within the available resources but hoped that increased resources would be forthcoming. In the past the Committee's discussion of the item had been rather general but at the current session, for the first time, its members had discussed the JIU reports in very specific terms. In addition, the reports were now taken up under the appropriate agenda items in other Main Committees and in the plenary Assembly. Moreover, the Member States were taking more action in response to the Unit's recommendations. It was a pity, in that connection, that the third partner in the shared responsibility - the other participating organizations - was not present, but he hoped that the Member States would send a clear message to their secretariats concerning the shared responsibility.

11. The proposed follow-up system did indeed look complicated at first sight. It had two parts, of which the tracking system itself was the most important. The other part related to the preconditions which had to be met by JIU itself, the Member States and the participating organizations. He hoped that the Committee would act on the recommendation.

12. **Mr. Repasch** (United States of America) reiterated his delegation's concerns about the ability of JIU to conduct comprehensive and methodologically sophisticated reviews.

13. Referring to the preliminary work programme for 1998-1999 (A/52/267, annex, para. 12), he said that, with regard to the proposed study on the United Nations performance appraisal system, his delegation would like to know what criteria of effectiveness would be used to evaluate the system and whether JIU would be able to obtain data on all evaluations. If it could not obtain such data, it should pursue other studies, since another opinion survey would not be of interest. With regard to the proposed evaluation of marketing of United Nations revenue-producing activities, it would like to know the planned scope and methodology for the study and sought an assurance that the Unit would not be duplicating the work of OIOS on the revenue-producing activities of the Postal Administration or the forthcoming evaluation of sales of materials of the Beijing Conference. With regard to the proposed study on the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women, it would again like to know what criteria would be used to measure the effectiveness of the activities.

14. Some of the reports listed in annex II to the 1997 JIU report (A/52/34) did not include recommendations and others simply provided information. For example, the feasibility study on the relocation of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research to the Turin Centre contained no recommendations, and the comparison of methods of calculating equitable geographical distribution within the United Nations common system described practices but

included no recommendations. Obviously, the implementation of such reports did not require monitoring. Other reports included recommendations which were too general to require action. In contrast, paragraph 4 of the tracking-system proposal set out in annex I to the report described recommendations containing well-crafted standards which could be implemented. Before focusing on a tracking system, JIU should concentrate on ensuring that its future reports met those standards. There might, however, be problems even when the recommendations could be implemented. For example, in order to track those recommendations that would require extensive consultation and coordination among the organizations of the system, JIU would have to establish data fields that reflected decision-making processes. The recommendations in the report on strengthening field representation of the United Nations system called for action by many actors: all organizations working at the field level, the host countries involved, and the donor community. In such cases follow-up would clearly not be a simple process. For example, he wondered how JIU would establish a realistic timetable for implementation. There appeared to be a critical omission in the tracking proposal in that it did not factor in the judgement of the persons responsible for the implementation of recommendations requiring complex coordination.

15. The Unit's apparent assumption that all recommendations had equal weight was particularly troubling. His delegation did not see how it could avoid establishing an order of priorities, particularly for recommendations that might have significant cost implications. For example, the report on coordination of policy and programming frameworks for more effective development cooperation, which had been well received by the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC), contained more than 20 recommendations, subsidiary recommendations or suggestions. To track only one of the more straightforward recommendations – the establishment of a data bank on development in each developing country – would require a very large commitment of resources. It would be impossible to track all the other recommendations since they implied actions by every organization involved in development. To ensure that action was taken and tangible results obtained, JIU needed to prioritize its recommendations. Those which promised to give the biggest return for the money spent needed to be identified. The recommendations would then carry greater weight than any resolution of a legislative body could confer.

16. **Mr. Othman** (Chairman of the Joint Inspection Unit) said that the first three reports mentioned by the representative of the United States were not included in the current programme of work but only in the preliminary work programme for 1998-1999. He could not give specific answers to all the questions because the reports were being handled by other inspectors and they were not yet at the implementation stage. He could, however, say that the report on the performance appraisal system would be confined to the United Nations Secretariat. The previous report on the subject had evaluated not only the appraisal systems as such but the way in which the successive systems had worked in practice. JIU had now been called upon to revert to the subject and establish how the Secretariat and the staff viewed the application of the latest system – whether it was easy to apply and, if not, what other ingredients needed to be added. The study on the marketing of revenue-producing activities had been suggested by two participating organizations. The report would be result-oriented and deal with the cost-effectiveness of such activities. Implementation of the feasibility study on the relocation of INSTRAW would depend on the reaction of the Second Committee to the JIU report on training institutes.

17. With regard to the proposed tracking system, the representative of the United States had put his finger on many of the issues which JIU itself had raised. His reference to paragraph 4 of the proposal was well taken, and it would be for the Member States themselves to decide whether JIU itself complied with the recommendations. It was true that it would be difficult to follow up the recommendations of the report on strengthening field representation since they were directed to a large number of actors. JIU felt, however, that follow-up would be possible if the tracking system was good enough. It was important to discover at an initial stage, before the recommendations were submitted to legislative bodies, whether they were accepted by the participating organizations. If they were accepted, the organizations should indicate which of its departments was responsible for carrying them out. Everything depended on the concept of shared responsibility. The Committee seemed to feel that JIU was playing its part in that respect. However, it could not work alone and needed the contributions of its partners. As he had said in his earlier statement, the preconditions had to be met by all the partners.

18. **The Chairman** said that the Committee had thus concluded its general discussion of agenda item 118.

Agenda item 116: Proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 (*continued*) (A/52/6/Rev.1 (Vol. I), A/52/7 (Chap. II, Parts I and II) and A/52/16 and Add.1)

Section 1. Overall policy-making, direction and coordination (*continued*)

19. **Mr. Halbwachs** (Controller), responding to questions raised at the previous meeting, said, with regard to support provided for the President of the General Assembly, that the President was provided with a full-time spokesperson, a security officer, two drivers, secretaries and temporary assistance as and when required. Background information was provided by the General Assembly and Economic and Social Council Affairs Division. The President was allocated a suite for himself or herself and staff, and there was a hospitality fund for official functions. It was proposed that the sum of $250,000 should be allocated annually, the modalities to be discussed with the current President each year.

20. With regard to the reclassification of the post of Executive Secretary of the Board of Auditors from the P-5 to the D-1 level, it was simply a return to the post's former status. Until four or five years previously it had been a D-1 post but it had been downgraded. That had not been a wise decision, given the responsibilities of the post. He noted that other comparable posts, such as that in the Joint Inspection Unit, were at the D-2 level.

21. As for the question of whether special envoys or representatives were included in the budget of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, he said that, since such posts were inevitably one-off, short-term appointments they could not be included in the budget. They were mentioned merely in fulfilment of the statutory requirement that the General Assembly should be informed of the status of such people on an annual basis.

22. **Ms. Peña** (Mexico) said that her delegation strongly endorsed the comments made in paragraph 61 of the report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) (A/52/16). It attached great importance to the work of that Committee.

23. **Mr. Chinvanno** (Thailand) said that, while he welcomed the information regarding support for the President of the General Assembly, it would help delegations in considering the budget if in subsequent years the budget could contain a subsection dealing with that matter.

24. **Ms. Buergo Rodriguez** (Cuba) said that her country attached particular importance to activities under section 1 and therefore felt deep concern about the reduction of resources in several areas. She would like to know, for example, on what grounds several posts were to be abolished or reclassified. It would be useful if such information could be provided in the form of a conference room paper so that delegations could have it before them during informal discussions. She also questioned the basis on which, according to the footnote to table 1.1, $3,459,000 had been transferred and how that transfer would be credited. In that connection, her delegation supported the remarks contained in paragraph I.5 of the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) (A/52/7 (Chap. II, Part I)). Her delegation supported the reclassification of the post of Executive Secretary of the Board of Auditors. With regard to CPC, her delegation fully supported its work and therefore considered that it should, as indicated in paragraph 1.33, of the proposed programme budget (A/52/6/Rev.1), hold a six-week meeting in 1998 and a four-week meeting in 1999.

25. With regard to executive direction and management, more information should be provided on the Office of External Relations in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, and particularly on what its functions would be. Her delegation was also concerned about the suggestion (para. 1.44) that the Secretary-General should use outside expertise in a number of fields; some of the issues involved were sensitive matters, for which experts within the Organization should be used.

26. The Secretariat should also provide more information in writing on the standardized vacancy rates often mentioned in the presentation of the budget. Lastly, she wondered why the cost of office automation and other supplies and of official gifts presented by the Secretary-General to dignitaries appeared under supplies and materials (para. 1.49) rather that under hospitality (para. 1.48).

27. **Mr. Kabir** (Bangladesh), speaking as coordinator of the least developed countries, welcomed the allocation of travel expenses for up to five representatives of the 48 Member States that were least developed countries; such an allocation would facilitate the participation of those countries in the work of the General Assembly.

28. His delegation also attached importance to the role played by CPC, which should therefore have adequate resources made available to it; in that context, $792,900 seemed a reasonable sum (para. 1.33). By the same token, CPC should indeed hold a six-week session in 1998 and a four-week session in 1999 in order to consider the budget outline and the mid-term plan.

29 The Secretary-General had, admittedly, a broad range of responsibilities, but $181,000 seemed an excessive sum

to spend on the services of outside experts in various fields. The matter was the subject of divergent views among delegations and unless it was adequately addressed in the informal consultations it might be difficult for the Committee to agree to the allocation of that sum.

30. He requested further information on the reclassification of two Executive Assistants of the Secretary-General from the D-1 to the D-2 level (para. 1.42). He wondered what additional functions the staff members concerned had assumed to justify the reclassification.

31. With regard to the replacement of the Secretary-General's official car (para. 1.40), efforts should be made to ensure the continuation of the existing loans for the biennium 1998-1999; that could save the Organization some $45,200. He also asked whether any regular replacement schedule was followed in that regard.

32. Lastly, he agreed with the comments by the representative of Thailand about support for the President of the General Assembly. It should not be a matter of providing temporary assistance; funding should be supplied on a regular basis.

33. **Mr. Sial** (Pakistan) shared the view expressed in paragraph 1.17 of the report of ACABQ (A/52/7 (Chap. II, Part I)) that the sum of $181,000 requested for outside expertise was excessive. With regard to gratis personnel, he said that reductions in such personnel and in staff generally were interrelated and should be considered simultaneously. He hoped that the report on gratis personnel would be available shortly so that the Advisory Committee – and subsequently the Fifth Committee – could consider the matter in its entirety.

34. **Mr. Halbwachs** (Controller) said that the Advisory Committee and CPC had already been supplied with information concerning the Office of External Relations; that information could be made available for the Committee's informal discussions.

35. With regard to the vacancy rates, he thought that the matter had been explained during the introduction of the proposed programme budget, but if further elaboration was needed he would be happy to provide it.

36. On the question of the footnote to table 1.1, he said that, in the past, the relevant table had reflected the resources earmarked for a number of offices, such as the Department of Political Affairs. Since the matter concerned temporary assistance during the General Assembly, however, it had been thought preferable to show costs under the individual offices rather than under section 1 of the budget. The footnote was a reflection of that.

37. As for the question of why the items included in paragraph 1.49 had not been included in paragraph 1.48 instead, he said that the provision of such supplies was not strictly speaking hospitality, and in any case the layout reflected the usual procedure.

38. With regard to the reclassification of two posts in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General from the D-1 to the D-2 level, he pointed out that the Executive Office was smaller than it had been before. Previously there had been an Under-Secretary-General and an Assistant Secretary-General, but the Secretary-General considered that those posts were no longer required and that it would be preferable to have two Executive Assistants at the D-2 level.

39. As for the replacement of the Secretary-General's car, every effort was being made to continue the current arrangement. The budgetary allocation had been included in case the existing arrangements were inadequate. There were strict procedures governing the replacement of cars: they had to be at least five years old and to have travelled at least 80,000 miles.

40. **Ms. Buergo Rodriguez** (Cuba), referring to her previous question, asked whether the posts proposed for abolition would be vacant and, if so, as of what date. If the information was not immediately available, her delegation would wish to be informed when it would be.

41. **Mr. Elmuntaser** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) drew attention to paragraph 1.8 of the report of the Advisory Committee, which indicated that the level of resources required by the Board of Auditors was determined by the Board itself. The question arose as to whether Member States were able to make any contribution to the determination or definition of the burdens borne by the Board of Auditors. With regard to the point made by the representative of Pakistan regarding the high cost of outside consultants, he believed that in-house consultants should be used wherever possible.

42. **Mr. Halbwachs** (Controller) said that the Board of Auditors was elected by the General Assembly and resources were allocated to it by the General Assembly: there was therefore no doubt that Member States could monitor the Board's activities.

43. With regard to the use of outside consultants, he said that there were no internal consultants; the proposal was that outsiders should be hired who had expertise which was lacking within the Organization.

44. **The Chairman** said that the Committee had thus concluded its general discussion of section 1 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999.

Section 2. Political affairs

Section 3. Peacekeeping operations and special missions

Section 4. Peaceful uses of outer space

45. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the Advisory Committee's first report (A/52/7 (Chap. II, Part II)), said that section 2 would be affected by the proposals on reform contained in document A/51/950. The financial implications of the reform proposals were to be found in document A/52/303 and, as indicated in the information paragraph following paragraph II.22 of its report, the Advisory Committee would comment later on those implications. He drew the Committee's attention to paragraph II.4, relating to the decrease in established regular budget posts. The Advisory Committee's comments on the status of gratis personnel were to be found in paragraph II.6. He also drew attention, in particular, to paragraphs II.7, II.8-II.10, II.11, II.12, II.14 and II.16-II.19.

46. It was proposed that 37 posts should be cut under section 3. Although the Secretary-General's declared intention was to phase out gratis personnel, the implications of a phase-out were not apparent from the documents before the Advisory Committee; they should accordingly be clarified.

47. The Committee had experienced some difficulty in understanding how efficiency savings had been dealt with in the context of the preparation of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999. Many of the savings were notional, and there had been no attempt to differentiate between savings in the regular budget and savings in the budgets for peacekeeping operations.

48. The Secretary-General had made no attempt to include resources for special missions funded from the regular budget which might be extended into the biennium 1998-1999. It would therefore be necessary for the Fifth Committee to recall how the funds for such missions were dealt with pursuant to General Assembly resolution 41/213.

49. Regarding section 4, it was very apparent from additional information received by the Advisory Committee that the proposed programme of work would require more resources than would be available to implement it. The inefficient functioning of the programme of work was therefore inevitable.

50. **Mr. Chinvanno** (Thailand), Vice-Chairman of the Committee for Programme and Coordination, introducing the relevant sections of that Committee's report (A/52/16), said that CPC recommended that the General Assembly should approve the programme narratives of sections 2 and 3, with some modifications as indicated in the report. With regard to section 3, the Committee had also made recommendations regarding the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA) and gratis personnel. The Committee recommended that the General Assembly should approve the programme narrative of section 4 without modifications.

51. **Mr. Maddens** (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the European Union and the associate countries of Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Romania and Slovakia, said that, in view of the central role which the maintenance of international peace and security played in the activities of the United Nations, it was a matter of concern that only 0.5 per cent of the Organization's total budget was allocated to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Full-cost budgeting would be of great utility in funding that Department; it would make it possible for decisions to be taken on all the resources needed to finance mandated activities. Such decisions could then be based on information related to financing through the regular budget and the support account and the activities carried out by gratis personnel as provided for in resolution 51/243.

52. Referring to the General Assembly's decision to phase out gratis personnel, he said that the phase-out of such personnel should be conducted in an orderly fashion so as not to affect the delivery of programme activities. In that connection, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations should produce a budget and restructuring plan which would take account of the need to retain a military planning capacity and peacekeeping management. The European Union hoped to receive further details of the phasing-out process in the near future, and at any event in reports on the support account and the first regular budget performance report for the biennium 1998-1999.

53. The European Union noted with satisfaction that the Advisory Committee had not sought to question the existence of the Lessons Learned Unit or the value of its work; at least partial financing of the Lessons Learned Unit and the Situation Centre should be provided through the regular budget.

54. The strengthening of the planning function at Headquarters was an urgent priority. In that connection, it was essential that the report on the establishment and financing of rapidly deployable mission headquarters should be issued as quickly as possible.

55. The European Union believed that the concept of special missions was a useful innovation in terms of applying resolution 41/213 to new mandates having to do with the maintenance of international peace and security. It was disappointed that the concept had not found acceptance.

56. **Ms. Duschner** (Canada) said that her delegation was concerned about the delay in the issuance of the report on the establishment and financing of rapidly deployable mission headquarters, and was frustrated that the creation of such a badly needed structure had become embroiled in the broader staffing and budgetary problems of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

57. **Mr. Kabir** (Bangladesh), referring to section 2, said that his delegation had noted the Secretary-General's proposal that the number of regional divisions in the Department of Political Affairs should be reduced from six to four. The Secretariat should explain exactly how such a reduction would contribute to efficiency.

58. According to the budget estimates, most of the resources earmarked for electoral assistance were to come from extrabudgetary sources. Efforts should be made to provide for as many electoral missions as possible through the regular budget.

59. His delegation had also noted a very large increase in funds earmarked for consultants and experts in the Security Council affairs subprogramme (A/52/6/Rev.1, para. 2.80). The "specialized services" mentioned in that connection should be listed in detail. Moreover, his delegation was not convinced of the need for the conversion of one P-4 post and two General Service temporary posts to established posts.

60. The current level of resources for decolonization and the question of Palestine should be maintained. In the latter case, his delegation found it difficult to accept the proposed abolition of a P-3 post (para. 2.110). The United Nations Disarmament Fellowship Programme (para. 2.128 (d)) should be continued so as to enable young diplomats from developing countries to familiarize themselves with various important disarmament issues.

61. With regard to section 3, he said that, as a major troop-contributor to peacekeeping operations, his country attached great importance to the effective functioning of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. His delegation regretted that the Secretary-General had been unable to provide for the full requirements of the Department, which had continued to rely on the support account and gratis personnel. Noting that $93,000 had been proposed to cover specialized consultancy services not readily available in the Secretariat (para. 3.19), he said his delegation wondered whether greater efforts might not be made to tap in-house skills. In addition, a very large amount had been set aside for the rental of photocopying machines; he suggested that it might be more cost-efficient to buy machines outright.

62. There was no justification for the proposal for the establishment of a Political Affairs Officer at the P-4 level to assist the Head of Mission of the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) (para. 3.55). Nor did his delegation agree that such large amounts needed to be set aside for rental or replacement of communications and data-processing equipment and vehicles in connection with that mission. The Secretariat should justify those proposed expenditures.

63. **Mr. Saguier Caballero** (Paraguay), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, said that the Group supported the activities of the subprogramme on decolonization; in that connection, more resources should be allocated to support for the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples until it had completed its mandate. A proposal had been made that the substantive activities of that subprogramme should be maintained in the Department of Political Affairs while the Special Committee's secretariat services were transferred to a new budget section. The Rio Group hoped to receive a report on the programme-related and financial implications of such a transfer.

64. The Group also wished to reiterate its support for disarmament activities, which should continue to be reflected in the programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999. The resources approved during the previous biennium for the Organization's disarmament activities should be maintained at the same level or increased.

65. With regard to peacekeeping operations, the Rio Group recognized that the maintenance of international peace and security was one of the Organization's essential activities. Such operations should not, however, be conducted at the expense of development activities. There was also a disturbing preponderance of gratis personnel in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Finally, the Group wished to express its concern about the failure to submit estimates in respect of the resources required for activities which were mandated to continue during the coming biennium.

66. **Mr. Gjesdal** (Norway) said that the maintenance of international peace and security would continue to be a core priority of the United Nations during the coming biennium. It would therefore be necessary to further strengthen the Organization's backstopping capacity. Under the proposed

programme budget, over half of the staff required for peacekeeping operations and special missions would be financed from extrabudgetary resources. There would consequently be an increase in extrabudgetary posts compared with the previous biennium. His delegation believed that the maximum number of posts should be funded from the regular budget; that would reflect the importance which the international community attached to peacekeeping activities. A number of proposed temporary posts in the field of peacekeeping operations should therefore be made permanent. The Secretariat should state which additional core-function posts would be given priority if the funding to convert them to permanent posts were to be made available.

67. No provision had been included in the budget for special missions which currently lacked a legislative mandate. Such provision would constitute sound managerial and budgetary planning. A proposal to that effect had been put forward by the Secretary-General in the programme budget outline but had failed to garner the necessary approval. His delegation believed that the Fifth Committee should reconsider that decision.

68. **Mr. Chinvanno** (Thailand) said that the primary function of the Department of Political Affairs was to help the Secretary-General to focus on preventive diplomacy, which was ultimately the most cost-effective way of ensuring international peace and security. Given that it was proposed to reduce the number of regional divisions in the Department from six to four, his delegation sought assurances that that would have no adverse effect on preventive diplomacy and peacemaking activities.

69. His delegation believed that the disarmament subprogramme should remain wholly under section 2 of the programme budget.

70. **Ms. Shenwick** (United States of America) said that her delegation had two major concerns regarding section 3. First, the regular budget was being used to fund posts which were more closely associated with, or defined as, backstopping, whereas the support account was being used to fund posts which could be considered as having core functions. That anomaly had persisted for some time and her delegation failed to understand why the Secretariat had done nothing to regularize the situation so that the posts funded from the regular budget corresponded to core functions.

71. The second major issue which concerned her delegation was that, under the terms of the proposed programme budget, $56.8 million had been relinquished with the exception of resource requirements for the first three months of funding for the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA). She would like an explanation. Her delegation was concerned that the Secretariat was taking funds which had been line-itemed for one activity and using them for something else.

72. Her delegation noted that some core functions were financed from the support account: the Secretariat should explain why it had not put forward proposals to transfer those functions to the regular budget within the overall level of posts currently proposed for section 3.

73. The continued use of gratis personnel in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations was to be welcomed. Such individuals contributed significantly to the effective operations of the Department and the skills which they brought to their work were not readily available in the international civil service.

74. Table 3.5 in the proposed programme budget (A/52/6/Rev.1) reflected significant increases in the requirements for contractual services and for furniture and equipment compared to the previous biennium. The Secretariat should provide more detailed information on the nature of those expenditures. Given the reduction in peacekeeping activities, her delegation would have thought that there was plenty of surplus furniture available. Furthermore, in view of the figure of $52,700 for the translation of documents produced by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, she wondered why the translation could not be done in-house. With regard to the staff members accommodated in the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) building (para. 3.25), she said that her delegation would appreciate more information on the Secretariat's plans for the long-term use of the building.

75. It was important for the United Nations to look for ways to avoid duplication of effort. For example, a request had been made for a provision for a political affairs consultant to undertake a study to draw lessons from the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process of past operations (para. 3.19 (b)). The United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), had, however, undertaken and published an extensive study on that very subject in 1996.

76. Posts alone had been costed in the Office of Operations of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (para. 3.29); further details should be provided regarding the objects of expenditure associated with those posts. In the Field Administration and Logistics Division, the relationship between the regular budget and funding for the United Nations Logistics Base at Brindisi was unclear. In particular, the programme budget narrative seemed to suggest that funding for the Base was to come from section 3, which

would contravene the most recent General Assembly resolution on the matter. Furthermore, the narrative also seemed to suggest that the United Nations Supply Depot at Pisa would receive funding from the regular budget, yet it was the understanding of her delegation that the Depot had been closed.

77. Finally, the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) and the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) had not been reviewed since 1966 and 1973 respectively. They should be subject to the same scrutiny and governance as other peacekeeping missions.

78. **Mr. Mirmohammad** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that his delegation supported the Advisory Committee's comments in connection with sections 2 and 3 regarding gratis personnel and consultants, as well as the conclusions and recommendations of CPC on those sections.

79. **Ms. Powles** (New Zealand), referring to section 2, said that her delegation had supported the efforts of the Chairman of the Special Committee on decolonization to ensure that appropriate emphasis continued to be given to the decolonization activities of the Department of Political Affairs. She therefore welcomed the Secretary-General's undertaking to that effect and did not believe that it was necessary to micromanage the Secretary-General's implementation of that undertaking.

80. **Ms. Buergo Rodriguez** (Cuba) said that her delegation was concerned about the reduction in resources for political affairs and the negative impact on the implementation of activities by the Department of Political Affairs. She requested clarification that resources would be sufficient to ensure the implementation of all mandates. She supported the Advisory Committee's recommendation that the proposal for the abolition of the regional disarmament centres (A/52/7, para. II.12, p. 2) should be drawn to the attention of the First Committee. She also requested additional information on that matter. The Disarmament Fellowship Programme should be retained in the upcoming biennium.

81. Her delegation recognized the important work of the Special Committee on decolonization and trusted that adequate resources would be provided to it. She noted with concern the backlog in the preparation of the Repertoire of the Practice of the Security Council and the Repertory of Practice of United Nations Organs (para. 2.79); more resources should be provided. With regard to the reference in the Advisory Committee's report (para. II.19) to delays in the translation of certain publications, she asked why there was no reference to the Spanish and Russian versions.

82. She was concerned about the proposed abolition of 37 regular posts under section 3, and endorsed the conclusions and recommendations of CPC in that regard. She was also concerned about the increase in the use of gratis personnel and trusted that such personnel would be gradually eliminated. In general, her delegation was also concerned about the lack of resources for mandated activities which would be continued in the next biennium.

83. **Mrs. Emerson** (Portugal) said that her delegation attached great importance to the subprogramme on decolonization and the work of the Special Committee on decolonization. She welcomed the compromise that had been reached between the Chairman of the Special Committee and the Secretary-General.

84. **Mr. Sulaiman** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation was very concerned about the delays in the issuance of the Arabic and Chinese translations of the Repertoire and the Disarmament Yearbook noted by the Advisory Committee (A/52/7, para. II.19). His delegation endorsed the Advisory Committee's view regarding the proposed abolition of one P-3 post under the subprogramme on the question of Palestine, and requested clarification.

85. **Mr. Sial** (Pakistan) requested further information on paragraphs II.5 and II.6 of the Advisory Committee's report (A/52/7). He noted that there had been a reduction in the number of disarmament fellowships as a result of resource constraints, and he hoped that adequate provision would be made in the upcoming biennium. The narrative on disarmament must be strictly in accordance with the mandates set out in the medium-term plan.

86. He requested the Secretariat's comments on the Advisory Committee's view that the Secretary-General should present proposals on total requirements from all sources of funding under section 3 (para. II.25). He also noted the proposal for the reduction of 72 posts under section 3 and the proposed provision for 134 gratis personnel. The proposed reductions in the staffing of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) and the United nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) must be scrutinized to ensure that their respective mandates were not affected. Proposed reductions should be justified in the same way as proposals for increases, and the Secretariat should explain how the proposed reductions would not affect mandated activities.

87. He noted the recommendation of CPC for the approval of an amended programme narrative for section 3 and its recommendation for congruity among mandates, resources and objectives in implementing peacekeeping mandates (A/52/16, paras. 85 and 86). CPC had also drawn attention

to the issue of gratis personnel and the need to review staffing issues for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in their entirety (para. 88).

88. **Mr. Zhang Wanhai** (China) said that his delegation supported the conclusions and recommendations of CPC and the conclusions of the Advisory Committee on sections 2 and 3. He was concerned about the late issuance of the Arabic and Chinese translations of the Repertoire and Disarmament Yearbook. The Secretariat must take the necessary measures to ensure that translations into all official languages were issued in a timely manner. Lastly, he requested an explanation of the indication in paragraph 3.22 (d) of the proposed programme budget (A/52/6/Rev.1) that 26 personal computers in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations were obsolete.

89. **Mr. Repasch** (United States of America) noted the cost-cutting measures taken by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space at its fortieth session. The costs of UNISPACE III must come from existing resources and voluntary contributions.

90. The existing resource level, if properly managed, was sufficient, and his delegation supported the Advisory Committee's view that all efforts should be made to keep the cost of UNISPACE III within existing resources (A/52/7, para. II.52). He requested an explanation of how resource growth of $13,200 for furniture and equipment under section 4 could previously have been included under section 26 G (Administration, Vienna), as well as an explanation of the increase of $45,700 for other staff costs, primarily general temporary assistance. The proposed resource growth of $136,400 for grants and contributions was unwarranted. He also requested an explanation of the Advisory Committee's view (para. II.51) that more had been programmed and more reports projected than could reasonably be implemented with the resources available.

91. **Mr. Saha** (India) asked whether the withdrawal of the Secretary-General's proposal for a P-4 post in respect of UNMOGIP would result in a commensurate reduction in travel.

92. **Mr. Halbwachs** (Controller) said, in connection with section 2, that the proposal to reduce the number of regional centres from six to four reflected the merger in the Department of Political Affairs of the two Asian Divisions and of the Americas and European Divisions in the interests of efficiency. The conversion of posts in that Department had been proposed on account of the sanctions committees. The posts had been created in 1983, and since the activities of the sanctions committees were continuing it was felt that they should now be converted to established posts.

93. The proposed abolition of one P-3 post under the subprogramme on the question of Palestine was a result of efforts to meet the General Assembly's call, two years earlier, for savings of $150 million. The incumbent had retired, and the Department had been able to manage without filling the post, which had remained vacant.

94. The proposal to restore the full amount that had existed in the biennium 1994-1995 for disarmament fellowships reflected their importance. The reduction in the biennium 1996-1997 had also been part of the efforts to meet the savings mandated by the General Assembly.

95. He would seek further information on the backlog affecting the publications referred to, but noted that priority was given to parliamentary documentation. The request for $26,000 in respect of consultancy service for the Repertoire of the Practice of the Security Council reflected the need for legal expertise which was not available in the Department of Political Affairs and which would not be needed on a permanent basis.

96. Regarding section 3, he said that no report on the establishment and financing of rapidly deployable mission headquarters would be issued in the near future. While the concept was generally accepted, it must be considered in the context of the overall evaluation of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. The question of the phasing out of gratis personnel and the impact on the support account would also be considered in that context. The Committee would receive further information in the proposals for the support account for the period July 1998-June 1999, to be submitted early in 1998.

97. The Secretariat had wished to make provisions for special missions in anticipation of mandates during the upcoming biennium, but the General Assembly had decided otherwise. It was in that context that the $56 million had been relinquished; it simply reflected a provision for special missions in the current biennium for which there was no mandate in biennium 1998-1999.

98. The request for consultancy services for demobilization reflected the lack of expertise within the Department of Peacekeeping Operations; again, such expertise was not needed on a long-term basis.

99. With regard to equipment and vehicles, the Committee would note that the proposed programme budget did not contain all the relevant background information; such information was, however, made available to the Advisory Committee. Regarding subprogramme 1.1, on prevention, control and resolution of conflicts, both posts and related expenses were shown under that subprogramme. The regular

budget contained no funds for the Brindisi Base or the Pisa Depot in the current or upcoming biennium. Funding was entirely from extrabudgetary resources.

100. As for UNTSO and UNMOGIP, there had been a review some two or three years earlier which had resulted in significant streamlining and post reductions in the current biennium. The current proposals were a continuation of that exercise. There were no travel costs relating to the P-4 post proposed for abolition in UNMOGIP.

101. The increase in contractual services for the biennium 1998-1999 reflected the need for programme managers to make adjustments in that area during the current biennium, in the expectation that cuts would be restored in the following biennium.

102. The increase in office automation equipment under section 4 reflected the fact that such funding had previously been included under section 27, which would now show a corresponding decrease. A small amount for general temporary assistance had been requested to assist in preparations for UNISPACE III. Lastly, the classification of 26 personal computers as obsolete reflected the standard policy of replacing equipment over five years, with 20 per cent being replaced each year.

103. **Mr. Sulaiman** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the Controller's replies in respect of UNTSO, Palestine and the delayed issuance of publications added nothing to the information contained in the documentation; a more convincing reply was required.

104. **Ms. Shenwick** (United States of America) said that the Secretariat seemed to have thought that it could use the amount of $56 million budgeted for peace and security for other purposes. That was a disturbing practice given the unique nature of budgeting in that area. The funds simply could not be used for some other purpose without a mandate.

105. **Mr. Atiyanto** (Tunisia) said that his delegation was also not convinced by the Secretariat's answers.

106. **Mr. Halbwachs** (Controller) said that the budget outline had contained a request for $70 million for unforeseen but anticipated special missions in 1998-1999. The General Assembly had rejected that request. It had approved an outline of $2.48 billion; the budget proposals totalled $2.479 billion and thus complied fully with the General Assembly's requirements.

The meeting rose at 1.25 p.m.

United Nations A/C.5/52/SR.20

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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 4 November 1997, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Chowdhury ..... (Bangladesh)
later: Ms. Incera (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Costa Rica)
later: Mr. Chowdhury (Chairman) ..... (Bangladesh)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

Contents

Agenda item 119: Pattern of conferences (*continued*)

Agenda item 116: Proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 (*continued*)

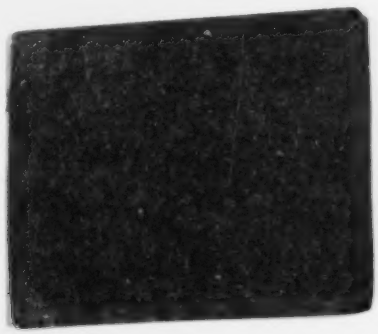
Section 2. Political affairs (*continued*)

Section 3. Peacekeeping operations and special missions (*continued*)

Section 4. Peaceful uses of outer space (*continued*)

Section 5. International Court of Justice

Section 6. Legal affairs



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97-82502 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 119: Pattern of conferences (*continued*) (A/51/946; A/52/32 and Add.1, A/52/215 and Add.1, A/52/216 and Add.1, A/52/291 and A/52/340 and Add.1; A/C.5/52/CRP.1)

1. **Ms. Fahmy** (Egypt) said that her delegation had noted the late appearance of documentation for some of the Main Committees. In the case of the Second Committee, the Chairman had been obliged to suspend a meeting because a report of the Secretary-General had not been available. When the Secretariat had suggested that the Secretary-General should present an oral report, most delegations had rejected that proposal. The introduction of so-called oral reports would have an adverse impact on the standard of debate, and the Secretariat must make documents available in time for delegations to discuss them and send them to their capitals for consideration. Her delegation agreed that the 20-page target must not be achieved at the expense of content and form. Reports must always be readable in all languages: that was the point in issuing them in the first place. The report of the Joint Inspection Unit on United Nations publications (A/51/946) had been printed in such a small font that it was impossible to read, and her delegation was unable to comment on it for that reason.

2. Her delegation had noted that the introduction of so-called "self-revision" had adversely affected the standard of translations into Arabic. Revisers had an indispensable role to play in translation into all the official languages, especially in ensuring consistency in the use of terminology. On a related matter, her delegation was still awaiting an explanation from the Secretariat of the abolition of the Arabic Language Coordinator and Arabic Language Teacher posts in Vienna.

3. In connection with the draft calendars of conferences and meetings for 1998 and 1999, her delegation had noted a disparity in the conference services provided to different meetings without being able to discern a clear pattern in the selection and allocation of those services. For most intergovernmental meetings there was no indication of what kind of records would be provided of the proceedings. While the meetings of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (item 2 in annex I to document A/52/32) were provided with summary records, those of the Working Group of the Commission on Human Rights on a draft optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (item 23) received no records of any kind. Similarly, the session of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (item 44) was provided with summary records while that of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters (item 20) was not. Her delegation would appreciate an explanation from the Secretariat of the criteria used in determining what kind of services were to be provided.

4. Her delegation agreed that conference services must be provided for meetings of regional groupings, in implementation of General Assembly resolution 51/211 A. The absence of such services during the current session had had a negative impact on the level of participation in such meetings, and consultations in a number of the Main Committees had been hampered.

5. In connection with the results of the review carried out by subsidiary bodies that had not fully utilized their meeting entitlements (A/52/215 and Add.1), her delegation sought clarification from the Secretariat concerning the manner in which the replies received from the subsidiary bodies had been addressed. The Secretariat had, for example, taken full account of the considerations presented by the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Commission on Population and Development, and it was to be assumed that the conference services provided to those bodies had thus not been affected. While her delegation thanked the Secretariat for its understanding of the nature of the work of those bodies, it nevertheless felt concern that the principle of respect for the special character of a body's mandate and work was not applied to others, such as the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. The latter performed a core function on behalf of the General Assembly in accordance with rule 157 of the Assembly's rules of procedure. It had indicated that it had a very heavy agenda and that conference services were not being underutilized. Nevertheless, according to the report, meetings were often held with less than the full complement of interpreters and with documentation in advance form and in English only. The report characterized that situation as representing cooperation with the Committee on Conferences, but her delegation was of the view that it was incompatible with the manner in which the Secretariat had addressed the considerations presented by other bodies. The Secretary-General of UNCTAD had indicated that there was a need to ensure flexibility in order to have resources available should meetings or negotiations continue beyond the forecasted time or dates. The report nevertheless stated that that need had now been totally eliminated by the excellent coordination and communication that had developed between the Board secretariat and the Conference Services Division at the United Nations Office at Geneva. Her delegation would like to know how the need had been

"totally" eliminated so that the same could be done in the case of other bodies.

6. **Mr. Saguier Caballero** (Paraguay), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, said that, while the Group supported the draft calendar of conferences and meetings for 1998, it urged the Secretariat to continue its efforts to ensure that efficient and high-quality conference services were provided by maximizing the utilization of conference-servicing resources. He was gratified to note that the utilization factor exceeded the benchmark of 80 per cent, in particular at Geneva and Vienna. The Chairman of the Committee on Conferences should continue to consult with the chairmen of bodies whose utilization had consistently been below the benchmark with a view to maximizing the use of resources.

7. With regard to the conclusions and recommendations contained in paragraphs 66 to 69 of the report of the Committee on Conferences (A/52/32 and Add.1), an active dialogue should be maintained so as to improve the coordination of conference services. In that connection, he welcomed the innovation of organizing video conferences.

8. While priority must be given to servicing Charter and mandated bodies, the Rio Group attached great importance to the provision of interpretation services for meetings of regional and other major groupings. He noted the slight decrease in the percentage of requests for such services that had been refused, and urged additional efforts to reduce the level of refusals still further.

9. The Rio Group recognized the utility of a cost-accounting system. Regarding the control and limitation of documentation, he reaffirmed the validity of the provisions on the length of reports contained in resolutions 50/206 C and 51/211 B. In that regard, he welcomed the introduction of new technology for the distribution of documents and the efforts to connect all permanent missions to the Internet so as to provide access to the optical disk system. However, electronic dissemination must not replace printed documentation, particularly if that would imply costs that not all Member States had the capacity to absorb.

10. It was imperative, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 50/11 on multilingualism, to provide the resources needed to maintain the quality of the Organization's system of languages at a high level.

11. In conclusion, he noted the Secretariat's excellent work in providing facilities for bilateral meetings, and welcomed the establishment of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services.

12. **Ms. Buergo Rodríguez** (Cuba) welcomed the improvement in the utilization of conference services to a level in excess of the benchmark, in particular at Vienna and Geneva. That would allow the Secretariat to improve efficiency and quality and would lead to lower costs. The number of bodies included in the statistical sample should, however, be increased, and should include the Security Council, in particular. The Committee on Conferences had earlier considered the matter, and she asked what stage its review had reached.

13. With regard to subsidiary bodies that had not fully utilized their conference-servicing entitlements, it was important for the mandates and effectiveness of such bodies not to be superficially assessed on the basis of the number of meetings cancelled. For example, any proposal relating to the Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization should be made only after substantive analysis by all the members of that Committee. The proposal to reduce the duration of its session to one week had been made by only two delegations, and had not been discussed by the Special Committee.

14. She noted with concern the practice of certain bodies not to use interpretation services, translations of documents and, in some cases, summary records. In that regard, the recent practice of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances and of the Committee on the Rights of the Child should be seen as exceptions. The provision of interpretation services to regional and other major groupings was also important, and she noted with concern that 32 per cent of requests for interpretation services for such meetings had been denied over the reporting period. The Secretariat should redouble its efforts to ensure that requests for interpretation services were met.

15. With regard to subsidiary bodies authorized to meet away from their established headquarters (A/52/216 and Add.1), her delegation fully supported the work of the Special Committee on decolonization, and noted the importance of its regional seminars. The Special Committee should be provided with the necessary resources in the next biennium. In that regard, she noted the letter from the Chairman of the Special Committee addressed to the Chairman of the Fifth Committee drawing attention to the Secretary-General's decision to establish a decolonization unit with the necessary resources in the Department of Political Affairs.

16. Regarding the control and limitation of documentation, she noted with concern the proposal that the length of Secretariat documents should be reduced from 24 to 16

pages, and the length of reports of intergovernmental organs from 32 to 20 pages (A/52/291). Those proposals, if implemented, might have a negative effect on quality and political content. She reaffirmed the provisions concerning the length of reports contained in General Assembly resolutions 50/206 C and 51/211 B.

17. She noted that only four of the bodies entitled to written meeting records which had used unedited transcripts had reported to the Committee on Conferences on their experience (A/52/32, para. 94). The others had clearly not replied because they thought it necessary to continue to receive summary records in view of the political sensitivity of their mandates. The matter should not be pressed further. She was concerned about the excessive use of cost-benefit analysis, which did not apply in that situation.

18. She welcomed the efforts to ensure access by all countries, in particular developing countries, to the optical disk system, and to reduce costs. The retention of printed documentation was, however, essential to developing countries, which could not assume any additional costs.

19. The quality of translation and interpretation was vital to the work of the Organization, and she reiterated her delegation's full support for the equal status of the six official languages. She noted with concern the comment in the report of the Committee on Conferences that decreased levels of funding in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 for the recruitment of permanent translation staff and the higher proportion of translations to be outsourced could adversely affect the quality of translation (A/52/32, para. 114). Budgetary constraints were responsible for that state of affairs, and the necessary resources should be provided.

20. With regard to the Joint Inspection Unit report on United Nations publications (A/51/946), the Committee should consider the recommendations of JIU with a view to identifying those which should be implemented.

21. She welcomed the provision of facilities for bilateral meetings during the general debate in the General Assembly.

22. In conclusion, she said she hoped that the programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 would contain appropriations permitting efficient conference services in the interests of facilitating both decision-making by Member States and the work of the Secretariat, which operated under enormous pressure in that area.

23. **Mr. Yamagiwa** (Japan) welcomed the improvement in the overall utilization of conference-servicing resources to the extent that the utilization factor had exceeded the benchmark of 80 per cent. He supported the request that the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences should consult the chairmen of bodies which had consistently utilized less than 80 per cent of their allocated resources. Delegations could make a substantial contribution in that regard by being punctual. His delegation placed importance on an active dialogue between Member States and the Secretariat so as to facilitate coordination.

24. He supported the position of the European Union on the control and limitation of documentation. The decision to reduce the maximum length of documents produced by the Secretariat to 16 pages should be respected, and Member States should be encouraged to be more careful in requesting reports. That should ensure stricter compliance with the six-week rule.

25. He welcomed the JIU report on publications, but regretted that, owing to the lack of the Secretary-General's comments thereon, it had not proved possible for the Committee to endorse the JIU recommendations. He asked when those comments would be available.

26. There had been problems in the scheduling and management of meetings of the Commission on Human Rights. Since human rights was a priority area, and in view of the limited resources available, the Commission should streamline the scheduling and management of its meetings. He requested detailed information on the Commission's meetings, including starting and ending times and lists of speakers.

27. **Mr. Shin** (Republic of Korea) said that conference servicing was one of the Organization's primary activities and a significant level of resources was allocated to it. Strengthening the provision of efficient conference services was thus of great concern and he welcomed the decision to establish the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services. Integration of the major technical and support services would strengthen conference servicing and engender significant administrative savings. The consequent reductions in posts must not, however, have an adverse impact.

28. He welcomed the fact that the utilization factor for conference-servicing resources had exceeded the benchmark of 80 per cent; that impressive attainment reflected increased efforts by both the Secretariat and Member States, and he trusted that still further improvements could be made. More emphasis should be placed on those bodies which failed to attain the benchmark. His delegation appreciated the role of the Committee on Conferences in helping bodies to make more efficient use of conference-servicing resources.

29. He welcomed the recent video-conferencing initiative, and noted that the optical disk system was now available to all permanent missions. He also welcomed the statement that the groundwork for a cost-accounting system had been laid, and endorsed the view of the Committee on Conferences thereon. Such a system might be expanded to other areas of the Secretariat.

30. He supported the proposed target of a 25-per-cent reduction in documentation produced by the Secretariat by the end of 1998. Member States must cooperate by curtailing requests for reports. The decision to reduce the length of documents originating in the Secretariat to 16 pages deserved support, as did the proposal that intergovernmental bodies should limit the length of their reports to 20 pages.

31. The JIU report on publications (A/51/946) was a well researched and comprehensive survey, and each of the 18 recommendations had merit.

32. Lastly, he expressed concern, despite some tangible progress, about the late submission of documentation, since its timely availability was essential to the deliberations of intergovernmental bodies.

33. **Mr. Blukis** (Chairman of the Committee on Conferences) said that one of the concerns of the Committee on Conferences was to ensure that high quality conference resources were provided and utilized as efficiently and effectively as possible. He was gratified that the Fifth Committee shared the concerns and supported the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee on Conferences. He also welcomed the interest in new technology as a means of improving productivity and cutting costs, and noted the concern to ensure full compliance with the principle of equal treatment of all official languages.

34. Member States could play an important role in promoting the efficient utilization of conference services, not least by ensuring that meetings began and ended on time.

35. Dialogue and coordination were essential to the work of the Committee on Conferences and the Secretariat would conduct briefings with new members of that Committee to familiarize them with its work.

36. Over the past two years the Committee on Conferences, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 50/206 C, had requested oral reports on certain matters. The experience had been positive and the relevant information provided in those oral reports was included in the Committee's report to the General Assembly.

37. **Mr. Jin** (Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services) said that the Committee's discussion of the item had provided the Secretariat with valuable guidance which it would conscientiously follow.

38. The request of the representative of Saudi Arabia for information about the proposed cost-accounting system had been met in document A/C.5/52/CRP.1. The cost of the system, a point raised by the representative of Pakistan, would be substantial, and its operation would require the continual entering of a large volume of data. No separate request for funding was being made since the Secretariat planned to draw on the budgetary provision for technological projects.

39. In response to the question put by the representative of the Bahamas about joint meetings of the Caribbean Community and United Nations secretariats, he drew attention to resolution 51/16. If the General Assembly decided to hold the meetings regularly on a biennial basis, with the next one in 1999, those meetings would be added to the calendar of conferences.

40. The representative of Kenya was right to call for a more balanced distribution of meetings among United Nations conference centres, but such a decision depended on the Member States. Exceptions to the application of the headquarters rule on the venues of meetings were authorized by the General Assembly.

41. Several delegations had raised the question of the provision of services to regional groups and other major groupings of Member States. Conference facilities were provided for such meetings on an "as available" basis pursuant to paragraph 8 of resolution 40/243. No resources were specifically allocated for such meetings, and priority had to be given to meetings included in the calendar of conferences. The Secretariat would, of course, try to provide conference services as far as possible.

42. The Secretariat shared the concern of the representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic and Egypt that the new document formats should not impair legibility. It was trying to develop formats which were easier to read, saved paper and facilitated electronic transmission. It was true that the ageing sound systems in several conference rooms at Headquarters had become a problem. One room had been partially reconditioned in 1997 and resources were being requested in the next biennium for improvements in some other rooms.

43. The Secretariat was fully aware of the provisions of resolution 51/211 C, to which the representative of Pakistan had called attention, and of the importance of uploading important documents to the United Nations Web site. In that connection it was gratifying to note that the Economic and

Social Council, in its resolution 1997/1, had expressed appreciation for the work of the Working Group on Informatics and had welcomed the uploading of the resolutions and decisions adopted by all the main organs since 1946 to the optical disk system. Uploading old documents entailed digitization of materials available only in hard copy or microfiche. Decisions needed to be taken as to which documents were particularly important and on the provision of commensurate additional resources. The representative of Pakistan had also sought an assurance that the level of resources requested for conference services would not adversely affect the quality of documents and other services. Any calculation of the resources required must be based on an assumption, in turn based on recent experience, of what the demand would be. If the Secretariat's projections for the coming biennium were accurate, it should be possible to provide satisfactory services with the resources requested.

44. A number of delegations had referred to the quality of translated documents. The Secretariat regretted any lapses in quality, but the errors should be seen in a statistical perspective: given the huge volume of documents translated, it was virtually impossible to ensure that there were no mistakes. However, not all mistakes were attributable to translators but occurred at other stages of document processing. However, the Secretariat was aware of the need to continue to improve the quality of translation under a continuing heavy workload. It was true that a high rate of self-revision might have an impact on the quality of translation, and a number of measures had been continued or expanded to maintain quality standards in that respect, including monitoring and spot-checking. In-service training of translators and training at summer courses in universities in various parts of the world had also been emphasized with a view to broadening the skills of translators and allowing the Translation Services to handle material on a wide range of topics. Increased contacts between the Translation Services and academic circles had also been encouraged.

45. Translation work done contractually must also meet the Secretariat's quality standards. The rosters of contractors consisted mainly of former United Nations translators familiar with the Organization's terminology and documents, and pressure to expand the rosters by relaxing standards was being resisted. Corporate contractors were selected by anonymous bidding, but account was taken of both the quality of their performance and their rates. In both cases the spot-checking of quality would continue to be expanded.

46. With regard to the accountability of the staff of the language services, there was probably no area in the Organization which allowed for closer monitoring of individual performance. He could assure the Committee that decisions on the careers of language staff closely reflected the detailed appraisals made on the basis of such monitoring.

47. The representative of the Syrian Arab Republic had drawn attention to shortcomings in meeting records. Obviously, records must reflect with absolute accuracy the statements delivered by speakers and the decisions of the bodies concerned. In verbatim records the original language version of a statement used the words of the speaker; in the other languages use was made of the interpreters' versions, which were checked against the original language. There was little reliance on interpretation for summary records, which were meant to report the proceedings concisely. Each summary record was drafted entirely in one language and then translated into the other languages. When copies of statements were provided, the exact language and nuances of the speaker were used in the summary record produced in the speaker's language. All records prepared by the Secretariat were subject to correction by delegations. Corrections were not normally issued for individual records but in consolidated corrigenda. The correction requested by the Syrian delegation to a verbatim record of the plenary Assembly would be included in a consolidated corrigendum, the issue of which would be expedited.

48. Referring to the question put by the representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic and Egypt about the post of the Arabic language teacher in the United Nations Office at Vienna, he said that the question had been passed to the Office of Human Resources Management, which was responsible for language training.

49. He could inform the representative of Egypt that conference services were provided to intergovernmental and expert bodies in accordance with the entitlement authorized by the General Assembly. The Secretariat could not deviate from that entitlement, which could be changed by the General Assembly, usually on the recommendation of the Committee on Conferences.

50. The Secretariat shared the Committee's concern about the late issuance of documents, and efforts were being made to improve the situation. In response to the questions put by the representative of Japan, the Secretariat was trying to find out when the Secretary-General's comments on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit would be available, and the secretariat of the Commission on Human Rights had been asked to provide detailed data on its meetings, but no reply had yet been received.

51. **Mr. Farid** (Saudi Arabia) said that his delegation could endorse the content of the conference room paper on the cost-accounting system but thought that the Committee

should be provided, through the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), with a report on the implementation of the system by the second part of its resumed fifty-second session. Information about the Secretariat's search for an in-house staff member to supervise the system would also be welcome.

52. *Ms. Incera (Costa Rica), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

53. **Mr. St. Louis** (Office of Human Resources Management) said that for budgetary reasons the entire language training programme at the United Nations Office at Vienna had been abolished by United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) as of 30 June 1997. The United Nations Office had then assumed responsibility for language training in Vienna, but as no resources were available training was provided only on an ad hoc basis. There were two full-time language teachers, for English and French, and four part-time teachers, including one for Arabic. The proposed provision for the next biennium would maintain the two full-time teachers and include some funds for part-time teachers. No answer had been received from Vienna as to why the post of Arabic language teacher had remained vacant for 15 years.

54. **Mr. Sulaiman** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that he would welcome a copy in writing of the statement just made by the Under-Secretary-General for use in the informal consultations. He would also welcome a copy in writing of the statement on the language training service at the United Nations Office at Vienna. Lack of resources was not an acceptable reason for abolishing the service. With respect to the post of Arabic language teacher, he said that a fuller justification was needed in view of the equality of all six official languages.

55. **Ms. Buergo Rodríguez** (Cuba) said that, during the discussion of section 2 of the proposed programme budget at the Committee's 19th meeting, she had expressed concern about the delay in the issue of the *Repertoire of the Practice of the Security Council* and the *Repertory of Practice of United Nations Organs*. She now understood that publication of the Arabic and Chinese versions of the two publications would be delayed by up to three years. Perhaps the representatives of the Secretariat could throw some light on the matter.

56. **Mr. Sulaiman** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation endorsed the Cuban position. A delay of three years in the issue of the Chinese and Arabic versions of the publications was unacceptable. A further response on the question of the abolition of the language training service should be sought from the United Nations Office at Vienna before the Committee concluded its consideration of the item.

57. **Mr. Jin** (Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services) said that the nomination of a staff member to supervise the cost-accounting system would depend on the resources made available in the budget. He did not know the reasons for the delay referred to by the representatives of Cuba and the Syrian Arab Republic but would obtain information as quickly as possible.

Agenda item 116: Proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 (*continued*) (A/52/6/Rev.1 (Vol. I), A/52/7 (Chap. II, Parts II and III) and A/52/16 and Add.1)

Section 2. Political affairs (*continued*)

Section 3. Peacekeeping operations and special missions (*continued*)

Section 4. Peaceful uses of outer space (*continued*)

58. **Mr. Nour** (Egypt) said that he supported the conclusions and recommendations on section 2 which were contained in the report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) (A/52/16). He hoped that the functions of the proposed liaison office to lead the activities of the Department of Political Affairs in Addis Ababa would be included in detail in the proposed budget, in accordance with the recommendation of CPC, and looked forward to receiving further information on the status of that office. He reaffirmed his delegation's belief that special priority should be given to all programmes pertaining to Africa. He fully supported subprogramme 7, Question of Palestine, and asked for assurances that the resources to be allocated to that subprogramme would ensure the full implementation of its activities until a final settlement of the Palestinian question was reached. The proposal to abolish posts in the Division for Palestinian Rights was unjustified.

59. He also supported the conclusions and recommendations of the CPC on section 3. He agreed that staffing issues for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations must be reviewed in their entirety, considering the large number of staff on loan to that Department. The Organization should be able to implement programmes fully without using gratis personnel. The matter should be considered in the context of the proposed cuts in posts and the implementation of General Assembly resolution 51/243.

60. He was concerned about the proposal to make further cuts in posts for the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) and the United Nations Truce Supervision

Organization (UNTSO), and wanted assurances that the cuts would not affect performance. Because the United Nations played a vital role in maintaining international peace and security, his delegation was prepared to consider any proposals or innovative mechanisms that could ensure the financing of missions which were expected to continue, as long as such financing in no way affected the regular budgetary resources already allocated to programmes and projects under the current budget, especially those concerning development, and adhered strictly to the current budget process, as laid down in General Assembly resolution 41/213.

61. **Mr. Stanislaus** (Grenada), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that CARICOM associated itself with the statement made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China to the effect that all necessary resources must be provided to carry out the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001, which was the main strategic document for programme planning and implementation.

62. Both the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) and the Special Committee on the Situation with Regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples had been concerned about the administrative decision to transfer the Organization's Decolonization Programme from the Department of Political Affairs to the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services, since they believed it would have jeopardized the political nature of that Programme. Fortunately, after a fruitful dialogue with interested delegations, the Secretary-General had reaffirmed that the Decolonization Programme, which had been a major success, was political in nature. In his letter of 27 October 1997 (A/52/531), he had announced that a stand-alone Decolonization Unit with the necessary resources would be established in the Department of Political Affairs to provide substantive input for the work of the Special Committee. He had also reiterated his commitment to implementing subprogramme 1.6 of the medium-term plan. Thus, the good judgement displayed by the Secretary-General and the Chairman of the Special Committee had resulted in a satisfactory compromise.

63. The Committee should implement the Secretary-General's important decision without delay by approving the staffing and budgetary provisions for the Decolonization Programme in accordance with the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001. Since most of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories were in the Caribbean region, CARICOM attached particular importance to the Special Committee's noble mandate. The ecological crisis in Montserrat illustrated the importance of the Organization's responsibility towards those Territories; the United Nations was Montserrat's last hope for survival. Accordingly, the Decolonization Programme should be given all the necessary human and budgetary resources.

64. **Mr. Atiyanto** (Indonesia) said that he fully concurred with the statement made by the representative of Egypt on section 2, subprogramme 7 (Question of Palestine). Considering the importance and sensitivity of the issue, he could not understand the proposal to reduce the resources allocated to that subprogramme. Every effort should be made to resolve the question of Palestine so as to ensure the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

65. Adequate resources should be allocated to enable the General Assembly to convene a fourth special session on disarmament, which had been supported by an overwhelming majority of Member States. With respect to section 4, he firmly supported the proposal to convene UNISPACE III, which should give priority to the promotion of international cooperation and exchanges in space science and advanced technology and to the examination of the latter's impact on the promotion of environmentally sound and sustainable development. The provision of updated information in that field would help to identify the needs of developing countries and facilitate national, regional and international efforts.

66. **Mr. Ayoub** (Iraq) said that his delegation, as a founding member of the Special Committee on Decolonization, fully supported the Special Committee's work and welcomed the Secretary-General's decision to keep the Decolonization Programme in the Department of Political Affairs. The Fifth Committee should approve staffing and budgetary resources for decolonization in accordance with the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999, and should approve the other budget proposals under section 2. Liaison between the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services was important in order to avoid duplication of effort, in line with the current reform process.

67. **Mrs. Emerson** (Portugal) said she trusted that the proposed budget would be modified to reflect the Secretary-General's decision to establish a Decolonization Unit in the Department of Political Affairs.

68. **Mr. Maïga** (Mali) said that he associated himself with the statement made by the delegation of Grenada on behalf of CARICOM. His delegation was a member of the Special Committee and attached great importance to its activities. In the light of the Secretary-General's decision to establish

a Decolonization Unit within the Department of Political Affairs, all necessary resources should be made available to that Unit, in accordance with the priorities and mandates set out in the medium-term plan.

69. **Mr. Riva** (Argentina) and **Ms. Buergo Rodríguez** (Cuba) asked when the Secretariat would submit a document on the financial implications of the decision communicated in document A/52/531.

70. **Mr. Halbwachs** (Controller) said, in reply to the representative of Egypt, that additional information on the proposed liaison office at Addis Ababa would be forthcoming. In reply to the question put by the representatives of Argentina and Cuba, he said that the proposed programme budget, as originally submitted, had provided for the funding of the Special Committee under section 2. Subsequently, the Secretary-General had presented the financial implications of his reform proposals in document A/52/303. Instead of modifying that document on a piecemeal basis, the Secretariat would wait until the General Assembly had finished discussing the issue and, in the light of its decisions and any further action by the Secretary-General, would then submit revised financial implications.

71. **Mrs. Emerson** (Portugal) said that it would still be necessary to adjust the amounts being allocated to the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services to reflect the Secretary-General's proposal.

72. **Mr. Sulaiman** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the Controller had not answered the questions he had asked the preceding day. He joined the representative of Egypt in calling for assurances that the elimination of posts in UNTSO would not affect that Organization's performance, and asked why military observer posts were being eliminated from UNTSO. He agreed with the Advisory Committee that the abolition of a P-3 post under subprogramme 7 was unjustified in the light of General Assembly resolution 50/214, part III, paragraph 6. Lastly, with respect to the delay in the issuance of the *Repertoire of the Practice of the Security Council*, he said he hoped that the savings of $188,000 mentioned in document A/51/873 would help to speed up the publication of the *Repertoire* in the six official languages.

73. **Mr. Halbwachs** (Controller) said that the continued streamlining of the UNTSO administration had involved the reduction of 13 military observer posts, with a corresponding reduction in support staff. That change was not intended to weaken UNTSO, which had a mandate to fulfil. With respect to the P-3 post in the Division for Palestinian Rights, that post had been kept vacant as part of the effort to achieve the savings demanded by the General Assembly. Since the Division had successfully reassigned the functions of that post and carried out its programme of work in 1996-1997, the Secretariat had concluded that the post was unnecessary and had proposed its abolition. The delay in the issuance of the *Repertoire of the Practice of the Security Council* had already been addressed by the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services.

74. **Mr. Sulaiman** (Syrian Arab Republic) said he understood that nine of the 13 UNTSO military observer posts which the Secretary-General proposed to abolish belonged to the Observer Group in Egypt; he asked why four other posts were also to be eliminated. He also asked whether the 23 Field Service and Local posts to be abolished related directly to the observers or to other duties.

75. **Mr. Halbwachs** (Controller) said that he would provide information on the remaining military observer posts at a subsequent meeting. The 23 posts referred to by the Syrian representative were support posts relating to the overall operations of UNTSO.

Section 5. International Court of Justice

Section 6. Legal affairs

76. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) introduced the Advisory Committee's report on sections 5 and 6 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 (A/52/7 (Chap. II, Part III)). Paragraphs III.2 to III.12 of its report dealt with the requirements of the International Court of Justice. In paragraph III.5, the Advisory Committee referred to the Secretary-General's proposal to increase resources for general temporary assistance to take the increased workload into account. The Advisory Committee felt that if the workload continued to increase, it might be necessary to examine the cost-effectiveness of using temporary services against that of using staff on board.

77. Paragraphs III.7 and III.8 concerned the processing of documentation. The Advisory Committee recommended that the Court should explore vigorously the introduction of new technology and the experience gained by regional and national judicial systems in that regard, with a view to reducing its backlog. It also believed that the General Assembly should encourage Member States to provide their own pleadings in the official languages of the Court; it had deliberately used the word "encourage", not "require".

78. In paragraph III.9 on the cost of premises, the Advisory Committee noted that the Carnegie Foundation had

requested that the contribution of the United Nations should be increased by 2.5 per cent in each year of the coming biennium. Upon requesting clarification, the Advisory Committee had been informed that the increase was based on the real estate inflation rate at The Hague; the general inflation rate for cost of living applied at The Hague by the United Nations was 1.9 per cent. With respect to the implementation of the recommendations of the External Auditors (para. III.12), the Advisory Committee noted that the Registrar had provided clarification concerning some of the External Auditors' observations and that measures had been taken to address their concerns.

79. With regard to section 6, Legal affairs, the Advisory Committee had noted that the International Law Commission was considering whether to split one of its sessions between New York and Geneva. A number of factors needed to be taken into account before such a request was granted, not least of which was the fact that meeting capacity at Headquarters was already saturated.

80. The Advisory Committee welcomed the fact that the Office of Legal Affairs planned to eliminate the backlog of the *Treaty Series* in three years. The Committee had also recommended approval of the proposal to reclassify a regular budget post from the D-1 to the D-2 level, thereby accommodating the Director and Deputy to the Legal Counsel (para. III.20). The latter currently occupied a D-2 post funded from extrabudgetary resources, which would accordingly be downgraded to the D-1 level. In view of the functions of the post, it would be more appropriate to fund it from the regular budget.

81. The abolition of six Professional posts and three General Service posts had been proposed in connection with subprogramme 4 (Law of the sea and ocean affairs), in view of the restructuring of the programme of work related to the entry into force of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (para. III.21). The Advisory Committee believed that the heavy workload in the Office of Legal Affairs actually warranted additional staff; it was therefore curious that a reduction was being proposed.

82. The report of the Secretary-General on United Nations reform (A/52/303) had been issued subsequent to the Advisory Committee's consideration of its draft report on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999. The financial consequences of the Secretary-General's actions and recommendations relating to section 6 would be the reclassification of a D-2 post in the Office of the Legal Counsel to the Assistant Secretary-General level with a subsequent increase before recosting. The Advisory Committee intended to revert to consideration of document A/52/303 in due course.

83. **Mr. Chinvanno** (Thailand), Vice-Chairman of the Committee for Programme and Coordination, introducing the relevant sections of that Committee's report (A/52/16), said that section 5 was not a programme and had therefore not been considered by CPC. CPC recommended that the General Assembly should approve the programme narrative of section 6 subject to the modification contained in its report. The Secretary-General's reform proposals contained in document A/52/303 had been considered by the Committee at its resumed session and its observations thereon had been issued as document A/52/16/Add.1. That document would be introduced in due course.

84. **Mr. Repasch** (United States of America), referring to section 5, asked the Secretariat to indicate where in the budget his delegation could find the amount allocated for the maintenance and operation of the renovated dining room at the International Court of Justice. Given that the Court's premises had been expanded and rental costs were therefore higher, his delegation would be grateful for more information on whether any downward adjustments had been made as a result of recosting changes made in the current biennium. The Chairman of the Advisory Committee should explain exactly who had provided the assurance referred to in paragraph III.12 of the Advisory Committee's report in reference to the Court's travel estimates.

85. Section 6 was for the most part consistent with the medium-term plan and the Organization's priorities in the legal field. However, his delegation hoped that adjustments could be made to take account of more recent developments such as the adoption by the General Assembly of the Convention on the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses, which was mentioned as an activity under paragraph 6.64 of the proposed programme budget. His delegation supported continuing efforts to bring the Organization's legal publications up to date. It also endorsed redeployment of resources from the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea to other areas within the Office of Legal Affairs; that was entirely appropriate in the light of the changing institutional structure of matters relating to the Law of the Sea. It seemed that further staff reductions and redeployments would also be possible.

86. His delegation appreciated the efforts that were being made to eliminate the backlog in the United Nations *Treaty Series*. Paragraph 6.27 of the proposed programme budget referred to costs for external printing. In that connection, the Secretariat should provide further details on whether the shift to repro-copying and desk-top publishing of treaties

could be accomplished more expeditiously in order to save additional external printing costs.

87. Since it was claimed that the possibility of the International Law Commission holding a split session would have only a marginal effect on costs, his delegation wished to know specifically what the cost comparison was. Further details should also be provided regarding attendance at meetings of the International Law Commission; specifically, the Secretariat should explain whether the budgets for travel and subsistence were based on a presumption of 100-per-cent attendance. Finally, the Chairman of the Advisory Committee should explain the basis for his statement that meeting capacity in New York was saturated.

88. His delegation wished to know more about the anticipated uses of the $41,300 requested for consultants and experts under subprogramme 1 and about the $65,300 requested for travel, in particular why the latter figure had increased in comparison with the current biennium. Similarly, under subprogramme 3, more details should be provided about the increased amount requested for travel and stipends for 32 fellowships. Specifically, the number of fellowships awarded during the current biennium should be disclosed for purposes of comparison.

89. *Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh), Chairman, resumed the Chair.*

90. **Ms. Buergo Rodríguez** (Cuba) said that the Secretariat should indicate what functions had previously been carried out by the posts under section 5 which it proposed to leave vacant.

91. With regard to section 6, her delegation was concerned about the delay in the publication of the *Treaty Series*. Appropriate financial and human resources should be provided to overcome the problem. Her delegation was also concerned about the increase in resources that had been requested for hiring experts; every effort should be made to avoid additional expenditures in that regard. It was also concerned about the reduction of three regular budget posts compared with the previous biennium. The Secretariat should justify the need for the reclassification.

92. Paragraph 6.23 made reference to overtime, which should be expressed quantitatively. In paragraph 6.38, her delegation was puzzled why reference had been made to resources relating to peacekeeping missions. The Secretariat should explain why no reference had been made to the Committee on Relations with the Host Country in subprogramme 3. While supporting the use of resources to cover the cost of travel and stipends for fellowships, as outlined in paragraph 6.71, her delegation would nevertheless appreciate a quantitative comparison with the previous biennium. It was disturbing that a significant reduction of posts was proposed in subprogramme 4. Such important functions should be carried out by experienced staff members on permanent contracts.

93. **Mr. Herrera** (Mexico) said that his delegation was concerned that the Secretary-General had proposed further cuts in the United Nations teaching programme designed to encourage the dissemination and wider appreciation of international law. Seminars, practical courses and grants in respect of international law were important, and they had already been subject to cutbacks in the current biennium. Such activities should at least be allocated the same level of resources as they currently enjoyed.

94. **Mr. Atiyanto** (Indonesia) said that his delegation supported subprogramme 4, (Law of the sea and ocean affairs) but was concerned that it did not adequately reflect what had been agreed in the medium-term plan. The programmatic aspect of the subprogramme should reflect more accurately what had been decided.

95. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the assurance referred to in paragraph III.12 of the Committee's report had been given by the Registrar. With regard to the contention that meeting capacity at Headquarters was saturated, he referred the representative of the United States to the comments in paragraph VIII.145 of the Advisory Committee's report (A/52/7 (Chap. II, Part VIII)), wherein it was stated that the Committee was informed that during 1995 and 1996 the numbers of meetings requested with interpretation in New York that could not be accommodated were 202 and 174 respectively.

96. **Mr. Halbwachs** (Controller) said that financial provision for the small dining facility at the International Court of Justice could be found in paragraph 5.22 of the proposed programme budget under the contribution payable to the Carnegie Foundation by the United Nations for its share of general operating expenses. The rent payable for the Court's premises was indeed adjusted in dollars whenever recosting was carried out. The costs of the International Law Commission were based on 80 per cent attendance.

97. Although the Secretariat was keen to speed up production of the United Nations *Treaty Series*, it was currently not in a position to accelerate the process any further. Additional funds for consultancy fees and travel had been proposed in response to a request from the Office of the Legal Counsel where experience had shown such expenditure to be necessary in the course of its work. The references to peacekeeping missions in the context of section

6 were in respect of personnel from the Office of Legal Affairs travelling abroad to discuss, *inter alia*, the legal aspects of status-of-forces agreements.

98. On the question of fellowships, the small increase proposed in the budget was an attempt to restore funding to its former level following the cuts that had been made in that area in the previous budget.

99. Matters relating to the Committee on Relations with the Host Country were handled by the Office of the Legal Counsel and as such were dealt with in paragraph 6.35, subparagraph b (iii) of the proposed programme budget. Finally, concern had been expressed about the significant reduction in the number of posts under subprogramme 4. Those reductions could be explained by the fact that a number of functions relating to the Law of the Sea which until recently had been performed by the United Nations were no longer the responsibility of the Organization; it had thus been possible to reduce the number of posts.

The meeting rose at 1.25 p.m.

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Summary record of the 21st meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 5 November 1997, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Chowdhury ..... (Bangladesh)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

Contents

Agenda item 142: Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations (*continued*)

(a) Financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations (*continued*)

Agenda item 116: Proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 (*continued*)

Section 7. Policy coordination and sustainable development

Section 8. Africa: New Agenda for Development

Section 9. Economic and social information and policy analysis

Section 10. Development support and management services

Section 11A. Trade and development

Section 11B. International Trade Centre UNCTAD/WTO

Section 12. Environment

Section 13. Human settlements

Section 14. Crime control

Section 15. International drug control

Section 16. Economic and social development in Africa

Section 16A. Regional commission

Section 16B. Regional Commissions New York Office

Section 17. Economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific

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97-82538 (E)

Section 18. Economic development in Europe

Section 19. Economic and social development in Latin America and the Caribbean

Section 20. Economic and social development in Western Asia

Section 21. Regular programme of technical cooperation

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 142: Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations (*continued*)

(a) Financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations (*continued*)

Draft resolutions A/C.5/52/L.4 and L.7

1. **Ms. Peña** (Mexico), introducing draft resolution A/C.5/52/L.4 on death and disability benefits and draft resolution A/C.5/52/L.7 on third-party liability: temporal and financial limitations, said that the word "principle" had inadvertently been substituted for the word "notion" in paragraph 7 of the former draft resolution. Since a number of delegations were still awaiting authorization to be able to approve the draft resolutions by consensus, she proposed that the draft resolutions should be adopted at a later stage.

2. It had been decided to postpone discussion of reform of the procedures for determining reimbursement to Member States for contingent-owned equipment until subsequent meetings of the Fifth Committee in early 1998, when the whole issue of peacekeeping operations would be considered.

Agenda item 116: Proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 (*continued*) (A/52/6/Rev.1, A/52/7 (Chap. II, Parts IV and V) and A/52/16 and Add.1)

Section 7. Policy coordination and sustainable development

Section 8. Africa: New Agenda for Development

Section 9. Economic and social information and policy analysis

Section 10. Development support and management services

Section 11A. Trade and development

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Section 14. Crime control

Section 15. International drug control

3. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the report of the Advisory Committee on sections 7-15 of the proposed programme budget (A/52/7 (Chap. II, Part IV)), said that provisions of $294,792,100 had been included for international cooperation and development.

4. Sections 7, 9 and 10, Policy coordination and sustainable development; Economic and social development and policy analysis; and Development support and management services, would be directly affected by the Secretary-General's reform proposals contained in document A/51/950, specifically by the proposal that three existing Departments should be merged into one. The Advisory Committee had been informed that, as a result of those changes, the mandate of the relevant structures would remain the same but the programme of work would be restructured. The Advisory Committee intended to make more detailed comments when it considered the report of the Secretary-General on United Nations reform (A/52/303).

5. The Advisory Committee had noted that the number of non-governmental organizations in association with the United Nations intergovernmental machinery had increased sharply. In 1996-1997 there had been 1,500 non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council; in 1998-1999 that number had increased to 1,700. The administrative and management implication, including the related cost, of the relationship between the United Nations and non-governmental organizations should be evaluated.

6. The intergovernmental machinery should be involved to a much greater extent in the review of the work programme of the relevant budget sections, and the Secretary-General should indicate much more accurately and precisely the financial implications of intergovernmental decisions on the programme.

7. Furthermore, the Advisory Committee recommended that the intergovernmental machinery of the new merged department encompassing units of the three former Departments should become more actively involved in an in-depth review of its publications programme (para. IV.19).

8. With regard to section 11A, Trade and development, the Advisory Committee had noted that the reduction in the number of posts was accompanied by an increase in the level of general temporary assistance and the number of consultants. Similarly, a reduction in resources earmarked for travel was accompanied by an increase in travel funded from extrabudgetary sources. The Advisory Committee had held lengthy discussions with the Secretariat regarding the use of consultants by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). There was a clear need to identify exactly which tasks were to be performed by

outside consultants and expert groups, and to monitor the cost-effectiveness of employing them. The Secretariat had justified the increase in the use of consultancy services on the grounds of enhanced flexibility in implementing the work programme. There was also an urgent need to review the proliferation of publications issued by UNCTAD.

9. With reference to technical projects, the Advisory Committee had noted that UNCTAD was considering charging a small fee for technical services. Since most of the users of those services were developing countries, the fees should be targeted in a way that would not undermine the original purpose of the projects.

10. On the matter of section 11B, International Trade Centre UNCTAD/WTO, the Advisory Committee had noted with concern that the administrative and financial arrangements recently entered into by the Secretary-General with the Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO) had not been submitted to the General Assembly for review or approval (para. IV.41). Accordingly, it believed that the agreement between the secretariats of the United Nations and the former General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in 1974 was still in force.

11. As to sections 12 and 13, Environment, and Human settlements, the relevant programmes of work were funded chiefly from extrabudgetary sources and were labouring under very difficult financial constraints. Furthermore, oversight bodies had had occasion to comment on problems of management, control and monitoring, in the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat).

12. The Advisory Committee had concluded that the programme of work for section 14, Crime control, was too ambitious to be carried out with the resources available. Even though a thorough review of the work programme had been carried out, no firm decisions had been made to adjust it. The Advisory Committee therefore recommended greater involvement by the intergovernmental machinery in the programme of work.

13. **Mr. Chinvanno** (Thailand), Vice-Chairman of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC), introducing the relevant sections of that Committee's report (A/52/16), said that CPC recommended that the General Assembly should approve the programme narrative of sections 7, 8, 9 and 10 subject to further consideration at its resumed session. The General Assembly should also approve the programme narrative of section 11A subject to the modifications indicated in the report. On section 11B, the Committee had not made any recommendations but had noted with concern that, owing to the request of the World Trade Organization (WTO) to revise the arrangements governing the programme budget of the International Trade Centre since 1974, the programme of work of the Centre for the biennium 1998-1999 was not available for review by the Committee. However, CPC had noted that a revised section 11B containing a complete description of the programme of work derived from the relevant subprogrammes of programme 9 of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 would subsequently be submitted to the General Assembly for review and approval.

14. The Committee recommended that the General Assembly should approve the programme narrative of sections 12, 13, 14 and 15, subject to the modifications indicated in the report. With regard to section 14, the Committee also recommended that the programme of work of the section should include activities that could strengthen international cooperation and improve the response of Member States in combating all forms of terrorism and transnational crime.

15. **Ms. Aragon** (Philippines), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) regarding section 11A, said that UNCTAD played an indispensable role as a focal point for the integrated treatment of development and related issues in the areas of trade, finance, technology, investment and sustainable development. It should continue to carry out its mandate through research designed to support policy dialogue and technical cooperation.

16. ASEAN noted that the proposed overall level of resources before recosting reflected a reduction of $2.7 million and a staff of 394, a decrease of 53 regular budget posts compared with the 1996-1997 budget. Her delegation sought assurances that those reductions were attributable to the completion of the reform and restructuring of UNCTAD. The reformed structure of the Conference should be consolidated with the full support of Member States. UNCTAD could then devote itself exclusively to the full implementation of its mandated activities. The Committee should keep the resource situation of UNCTAD under review to ensure that the proposed reductions would not adversely affect the efficient and effective implementation of mandated programmes and activities.

17. **Mr. Erdenebileg** (Mongolia), speaking on behalf of the Group of landlocked developing countries regarding section 11A, said that landlocked States faced tremendous obstacles and hardships in their efforts to achieve their development goals. The Group was therefore surprised to see that there was a proposal to eliminate a D-1 post in the Office of the Special Coordinator for Least Developed,

Landlocked and Island Developing Countries (A/52/6/Rev.1, para. 11A.66). That post was the only one in the entire United Nations system responsible for activities relating to landlocked developing countries. Its abolition therefore made it impossible for UNCTAD to fulfil its mandate in that area. UNCTAD in general, and the Office of the Special Coordinator in particular, served as a focal point for activities relating to landlocked developing countries at the global level.

18. Although his delegation was fully aware of the need to improve the cost-effectiveness of the United Nations, efficiency measures would serve no purpose if they compromised activities designed to assist developing countries with special needs such as landlocked States. The Group therefore urged that the D-1 post should be retained.

19. **Ms. Montaño-Durán** (Bolivia) said that her delegation endorsed the statement made by the representative of Mongolia on behalf of the Group of landlocked developing countries with regard to section 11A. Noting that provision for UNCTAD reflected a resource decrease of $2,755,400, or 2.4 per cent, compared with the 1996-1997 appropriations, she said her delegation felt that such a decrease might adversely affect the execution of the Conference's programme of work, with inherent implications for subprogramme 5. Her delegation was also opposed to the abolition of the D-1 post in the Office of the Special Coordinator, which would send a signal that the Organization had downgraded the importance of the problems faced by landlocked developing States.

20. **Mr. Kabir** (Bangladesh) said, in connection with section 11A (Trade and development), that his delegation recognized the useful work done by UNCTAD in support of developing countries and the efforts it had made to reform.

21. He shared the hope of the Advisory Committee (A/52/7 (Chap. II, Part IV, para. IV.27)) that the transfer of 11 posts to the budgets of the regional commissions would not adversely affect the interaction between UNCTAD and the commissions, and asked whether the Secretariat had conducted a performance evaluation to assess the impact of the transfer. The P-4 post to be established for the follow-up to the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (para. IV.28) should be filled as a matter of urgency.

22. The increased provision for consultants referred to in paragraph IV.31 of the Advisory Committee's report was the logical consequence of staff reductions. He agreed with the Advisory Committee that the estimates for consultants appeared to be more than was required, and that there was a need to identify more clearly the work to be carried out by consultants, ad hoc expert groups and the staff of the UNCTAD secretariat.

23. With regard to paragraph IV.32 of the report, he supported the proposed reclassification of a D-2 post in the Office of the Secretary-General of UNCTAD to the Assistant Secretary-General level, and the conversion of another D-2 post from a temporary to an established basis. Those changes were appropriate in view of the new role of UNCTAD. He was concerned about a proposed reduction under subprogramme 5 (Least developed, landlocked and island developing countries) affecting a D-1 post. Any further reduction under that subprogramme would be detrimental to the least developed countries. A further look should be taken at all related subprogrammes.

24. **Ms. Silot Bravo** (Cuba) asked for a written indication, to be made available at a formal meeting, of the impact, under each section, of post reductions and efficiency and savings measures on the implementation of mandated programmes and activities, as well as an indication of any compensatory measures, an explanation of how the proposed programme budget would accommodate the phasing out of gratis personnel, and a full accounting of the resources needed to implement programmes and activities.

25. There was a particular need for resources to implement mandates under section 7 (Policy coordination and sustainable development). In that regard, she noted the deferral of initiatives which were to be undertaken by the Division for Policy Coordination and Economic and Social Council Affairs. Reductions under section 7 also had a negative impact on the Division for the Advancement of Women, particularly with regard to participation by non-governmental organizations in dissemination activities. There was a high vacancy rate under section 7, and she asked what activities related to the vacant posts. She noted the deferred and postponed outputs under subprogramme 2 (Advancement of women) and the fact that in a number of areas the scope of work in the biennium 1998-1999 would be at the 1996-1997 level. She requested clarification.

26. Appropriations relating to non-governmental organization activities were contained in various sections, and should be brought together under section 7. She requested confirmation that references in the proposed programme budget to non-governmental organizations were to those in consultative status.

27. She was concerned about the indication in paragraph 7.38 of the proposed programme budget (A/52/6/Rev.1 (Vol. I)) that other participants would be involved in the preparation of policy reports. In that regard, she endorsed

paragraphs 109 and 110 of the report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (A/52/16).

28. The reports referred to in paragraph 7.53 of the proposed programme budget seemed to involve duplication. With regard to subprogramme 5 (Combating desertification, particularly in Africa), she noted that table 7.18 contained no indication of post requirements for the biennium 1998-1999. Although those posts were to be discontinued at the end of 1998, information should be provided for the first year of the biennium. Lastly, with respect to paragraph 7.98 of the proposed programme budget, she asked for justification for the abolition of three General Service posts, apparently in anticipation of benefits from the introduction of the Integrated Management Information System.

29. **Mr. Maiga** (Mali) endorsed the statement by the representative of Mongolia and drew attention to the particular difficulties faced by land-locked developing countries. Accordingly, the D-1 post in the Office of the Special Coordinator should be retained. He noted with concern the overall reduction in resources for UNCTAD, as well as the revised institutional framework for activities for the least developed countries. It was important to ensure that those activities were not affected by the new approach. He regretted that a P-4 post, to cover small island developing countries, was not proposed for inclusion. He welcomed the conversion of a D-2 post to the Assistant Secretary-General level in the Office of the Secretary-General of UNCTAD, and noted the reduction of some $13 million in respect of activities relating to sustainable development. Lastly, he welcomed the increase in resources under section 8 (Africa: New Agenda for Development).

30. **Mr. Okoth Oyugi** (Kenya) said that, as a result of dwindling contributions to its Environment Fund and trust funds, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), could not play its intended role as the principal environmental body within the system. The proposed resource growth of $351,400 was not enough, and he noted with concern the indication in paragraph 12.6 of the proposed programme budget that Fund programme activities had been budgeted at $75 million for the biennium 1998-1999.

31. Regrettably, the establishment of the United Nations Office at Nairobi had led to a diversion of funds from mandated programmes. The Office was currently operating on finances drawn from the Environment Fund; that was an irregular situation, given that United Nations offices at New York, Vienna and Geneva were financed under the regular budget. Urgent steps should be taken to provide regular budget funding. Further, the establishment of regional environmental offices had had an adverse effect on the Environment Fund and trust funds, and he shared the view of the Advisory Committee that the decentralized structure might adversely affect the capacity of UNEP to deliver its mandated programmes (para. IV.49).

32. The United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) was also beset by difficulties, with a decrease in regular budget posts and an increase in extra-budgetary posts. In that regard, he requested an explanation of the proposed abolition of two Professional and five local-level regular budget posts, and an assurance that the cuts would not affect the Habitat Agenda. The Secretary-General should give priority to the management of programmes, as called for by the Commission on Human Settlements.

33. **Mr. Repasch** (United States of America) said that, while the 1998-1999 overall assessment of $105.6 million for UNCTAD reflected some success in reining in spending, it was still excessive. Staff costs accounted for 88 per cent of the budget and the staffing structure was unacceptably top-heavy, with one Assistant Secretary-General post, 5 D-2 posts and 20 D-1 posts. His delegation did not support the proposed establishment of a post at the Assistant Secretary-General level, or the proposed conversion of a D-2 post to an established basis. He requested an explanation of the various increases referred to in paragraph IV.29 of the Advisory Committee's report and regretted that ACABQ had not made any recommendations in that regard. The same problem arose under other budget sections; the Chairman of the Advisory Committee should explain the absence of recommendations in such circumstances.

34. He shared the Advisory Committee's concern about the potential for duplication, particularly with regard to published material. The Working Party on the Medium-term Plan and the Programme Budget was to have reviewed the programme of work for UNCTAD for the biennium 1998-1999, and he requested information on its findings.

35. His delegation strongly supported the work of the International Trade Centre, and welcomed the new focus on more practical programmes intended to help developing programmes to improve their international trade. He regretted that the programme of work for 1998-1999 was not yet available, owing to a request by WTO for revised budget arrangements. He asked when the revised section 11 B would be available.

36. With respect to section 12, his delegation placed high priority on continued reform at UNEP. He asked where matters stood in the endeavours to ensure that UNEP could manage its resources and discharge the important responsibilities entrusted to it. He requested an explanation

of the increase in general operating expenses, since it was not clear which related to the Governing Council and which to executive direction and management. Noting the reduced budget for the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, he said he hoped that its effectiveness would not be reduced.

37. He disagreed with the statement in paragraph 12.6 of the proposed programme budget that a management administrative support costs budget of $28.5 million had been approved by the Governing Council of UNEP. In fact, a budget of $27.5 million had been approved, with an emergency allocation of $1 million, to be used on an as-needed basis only. The wording of the paragraph should be revised.

38. He asked what had been done to correct the problems identified by the Office of Internal Oversight Services at the UNEP regional coordination unit for the Caribbean, where serious management deficiencies had been discovered, including duplication of activities and excessive travel. In contrast, the audit of activities under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora had revealed commendable efficiency. He asked what impact the UNEP programme of work for 1998-1999 would have on the proposed programme budget.

39. He understood that a substantial pay increase had recently been awarded to local staff in Nairobi, and asked what the total costs would be, how they would be met, and where in the budget they were reflected.

40. Regarding section 13, the Commission on Human Settlements had not approved a work programme or final budget for the biennium 1998-1999 because of difficulties at the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat). Accordingly he asked what the status was of the estimates under that section, and where matters stood with regard to the review of the work programme of the Centre for Human Settlements requested by the Commission.

41. With respect to table 13.3 (A/52/6/Rev.1 (Vol. I)), he asked what the status was of the vacant Under-Secretary-General post and where the resources were provided for in the budget. The number of P-4, D-1 and D-2 posts in the table was excessive. He asked for an explanation of the amount of $12,200 relating to overtime for the Office of the Executive Director (para. 13.12), and challenged the amount of $79,100 for consultancy services (para. 13.13). With regard to the amount of $30,800 for travel by the Executive Director (para. 13.14), he noted that expenditure under that heading had previously been abused, and asked what additional controls had previously been established. He asked what basis there was for the projected increase of $20,000 in communications requirements (para. 13.15). The requirements of $127,400 for equipment (para. 13.17) were overstated, particularly the amount for computers. There should be a freeze on spending on equipment at Habitat.

42. **Ms. Brennen-Haylock** (Bahamas) said, with regard to section 7, that her delegation noted the concern expressed by the Advisory Committee in paragraph IV.9 of its report about the adverse impact of the budget reductions on the work of the Division for the Advancement of Women. Such an impact was not acceptable because the Division had taken on additional responsibilities in the light of the conclusions of the Beijing Conference. Her delegation would like to know why the Division's D-2 post had disappeared. Its functions as a focal point had acquired special importance under the Platform for Action, and it was not acceptable that their financing should be transferred from the regular budget to extrabudgetary resources. The Advisory Committee noted in paragraph IV.8 that a few specific comments had been made in the Commission on the Status of Women. She could not recall that happening in the Commission.

43. Turning to section 14, she said it was worrying that the principle of equitable geographical distribution was still not applied in the secretariat of the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Division. In paragraph IV.66 of its report, the Advisory Committee commented on the Division's heavy workload that would be more than it could handle. Since crime was supposed to be a priority area, commensurate resources should be allocated under that section.

44. **Mr. Saha** (India) said that his delegation supported the request made by the representative of the United States for information as to when the revised section 11B would be available. It was confused about the procedural aspects. The report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services had not been discussed by the Joint UNCTAD/WTO Advisory Group on the International Trade Centre, which, at its session in April 1997, had asked for a review of the report. It might be inappropriate for the General Assembly to proceed on the matter without obtaining the views of the International Trade Centre, for the Centre was a subsidiary body of WTO as well as of UNCTAD.

45. **Mr. Hanson-Hall** (Ghana) said that his delegation noted with respect to section 8, that, in CPC, several delegations had expressed concern about the imbalance in the distribution of resources between the subprogrammes. It wondered whether, despite the increases of 16.5 per cent in regular budget resources and 50.9 per cent in extrabudgetary resources noted by the Advisory Committee in paragraph IV.21 of its report, the level of programme implementation in 1998-1999 would be the same as in 1996-

1997, and whether the resources allocated were sufficient for the full implementation of the programmes.

46. **Mr. Mazemo** (Zimbabwe) said that his delegation endorsed the statement made by the representative of Mongolia. It shared the concern of the Advisory Committee (A/52/7, para IV.3) about the 35 per cent decrease in extrabudgetary resources for the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development and the expected further decrease as a result of a 50 per cent reduction in the contributions of the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) to the Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis. It endorsed comments made by the representative of Mali about the Office of the Special Coordinator. It also shared the concerns expressed by the representative of Cuba about subprogramme 5 (combatting desertification, particularly in Africa). As the Advisory Committee had noted in paragraph IV.7 of its report, the posts for 1998 had not been included in the staffing table. Since the activity had been approved by the General Assembly, his delegation would welcome clarification of that point.

47. **Ms. Silot Bravo** (Cuba) said, with respect to section 9, that her delegation would welcome clarification of the increased hiring of consultants and experts shown in table 9.2 of the proposed programme budget and of the reasons for the proposed abolition of the D-1 post. It wondered what functions and mandates would be affected thereby. It would also welcome information about the pattern of expenditure for the specialized consultancy services not available in the Secretariat referred to in paragraph 9.40. It thought that the first sentence of paragraph 9.47 was incorrect and should be deleted.

48. Turning to section 10, she said that the wording of paragraph 10.22 on the work of the Department for Development Support and Management Services should be brought into line with the language of the medium-term plan. Her delegation could not understand the concept of "countries at risk of conflict", mentioned in paragraph 10.29, or the concept of "countries in recovery and rehabilitation and other countries where the needs are greatest", mentioned in paragraph 10.31. Consideration should be given to deleting the language in question.

49. With regard to section 11, her delegation would welcome further information about the changes resulting from the restructuring of UNCTAD and about the posts to be abolished. It would also like information on the following points: the reasons why, according to table 11A.1, increased resources were requested for executive direction and management but not for the programme of work; the criteria which had governed the percentage distribution of resources under the programme of work and why such a small amount had been allocated to subprogramme 5; and the number of posts listed in table 11A.12 which related to assistance to the Palestinian people and the changes which might result from the proposed budget cuts.

50. On section 12, her delegation would welcome clarification as to why, according to paragraph 12.8, a much greater proportion of resources was allocated to executive direction and management than to the programme of work.

51. In connection with section 13 she drew attention to paragraph 32 of document A/C.5/51/53, which indicated that the implementation of the Habitat programme had been delayed owing to the cancellation of certain activities. She asked what criteria the deferment of the programme had been based on and what allocations had been made for its implementation.

52. **Ms. Peña** (Mexico) said that her delegation endorsed the recommendations of ACABQ and CPC on the sections under consideration. It reserved the right to speak on sections 14 and 15 at a subsequent meeting when they were taken up in the context of the reform proposals.

53. **Ms. Aragon** (Philippines) said that her delegation fully supported subprogramme 2 in section 7 and endorsed the concerns expressed by the representative of the Bahamas concerning paragraph IV.9 of the Advisory Committee's report. With regard to section 9, it sought clarification of the proposed reclassification of a P-5 post to the P-4 level mentioned in paragraph 9.39. In paragraph IV.15 of its report the Advisory Committee noted that it had been informed that the rational for the downgrading was to realize further economies, although the Secretary-General had requested the post at the P-5 level for the biennium 1996-1997 in view of the importance of the issues of international migration.

54. **Mr. Halbwachs** (Controller) said that part of the answer to the many questions about the adequacy of the overall level of resources and the impact of budget cuts on the programme of work was to be found in the documents before the Committee, which described what was going to be delivered with the resources requested. Details of the impact would appear in the programme performance report in the spring of 1998.

55. He could give an assurance that the proposed reduction in the UNCTAD budget was due to the reforms and the restructuring. With regard to the questions about subprogramme 5 and the abolition of a D-1 post, he would point out that, as part of the reorganization of the UNCTAD secretariat, as reflected in the medium-term plan, which had

been discussed in CPC as well as in the Fifth Committee in 1996, the subprogramme was to be coordinated by the Office of the Special Coordinator. It had become a cross-cutting issue in UNCTAD; the work concerned was not restricted to subprogramme 5 and was referred to in many other places in section 11A. The activities had not in fact been cut. He understood that the post connected with small island countries would be filled shortly.

56. He was not sure that he understood the question put by the representative of India about the International Trade Centre and would report back to him privately. In any event, the Secretariat hoped that all the documents on the Centre would be ready by about the middle of November. It must be remembered that the United Nations drew up its budget in United States dollars and the World Trade Organization in Swiss francs; it was sometimes hard to reconcile the different requirements of the legislative bodies of the two organizations.

57. With regard to desertification activities, since the United Nations budget was a biennial one, there was always a problem when an activity was to be dropped after the first year. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification was about to enter into force and the United Nations would cease to be responsible for financing its secretariat at the end of 1998. The post in question would not be abolished until then. The same consideration applied to the question put by the representative of Zimbabwe about the apparent reduction in extrabudgetary resources for sustainable development activities; the trust funds for such activities would also disappear from the United Nations budget at the end of 1998 and reappear in the budget of the Convention's secretariat.

58. It was not true that the United Nations Office at Nairobi was financed entirely from UNEP resources. More than 110 posts were provided for under section 27 of the regular budget of the United Nations. The new programme of work for Habitat had been adopted and copies could be circulated to the Committee. It had no programme budget implications. There was no question of freezing Habitat resources under the regular budget: the crisis was one of extrabudgetary resources. The post of Under-Secretary-General in Habitat had not been abolished.

59. As for the overtime worked in the Office of the Executive Director of Habitat, it was common practice in the United Nations for senior officials to work long hours and they needed support staff. Equipment was needed for Habitat, as elsewhere; as he had explained at the preceding meeting, the normal arrangement was for equipment to be replaced every five years. Full details of the proposed cuts in Habitat activities in the biennium 1998-1999 were contained under section 12 of document A/C.5/50/57/Add.1. The amount of travel by the Executive Director was not excessive at $30,000 for a two-year period. There had in fact been an increased amount of travel in connection with HABITAT II in Istanbul.

60. The programme of work of UNEP would be reviewed in December by its Governing Council, and the revisions would take effect in 1998. It was correct for most of the resources to be allocated to executive direction and management and not to the programme. The resolution establishing UNEP provided that the United Nations should finance the Office of the Executive Director and the secretariat of the Governing Council, it being understood that the programme of work was financed almost entirely from the Environment Fund. The follow-up of the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on UNEP was a matter for the Executive Director of UNEP.

61. He understood that the programme of work of the Division for the Advancement of Women had been approved by the Commission. The D-2 post had disappeared because it was proposed that the Division should be headed by an Assistant Secretary-General. He believed that the focal point had always been funded exclusively from extrabudgetary resources.

62. Paragraph 9.40 made such a large provision for specialized consultancy services because the Commission on Population and Development sometimes asked the Secretariat to deal with specific demographic issues outside the areas of specialization of its staff members. It was better in such circumstances to call in short-term consultants. The abolition of a D-1 post shown in table 9.6 had no implications for programmes or mandates: it resulted from reorganization of the Office of the Under-Secretary-General.

63. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), replying to the representative of the United States, recalled that in his initial introduction, at the Committee's 11th meeting, of the Advisory Committee's first report on the proposed programme budget for 1998-1999 (A/52/7), he had indicated that, since the report covered only the initial estimates, and in view of the ongoing discussion in the plenary Assembly of the reform proposals contained in document A/51/950, the Advisory Committee had decided to submit its recommendations on document A/52/303 together with its views on the overall level of resources for 1998-1999 at a later stage. In its report on document A/52/303, it would review the comments it had made in document A/52/7 and

identify areas where its recommendations had budgetary implications.

64. The Advisory Committee would not necessarily recommend resource reductions in all of those areas. In some cases, it might find that there was a discrepancy between the approved level of resources and the programme of work to be implemented. In such cases, it would not recommend budget increases, but would make comments intended to guide the Secretariat in managing those resources as efficiently as possible. The General Assembly should indicate whether it concurred with the Advisory Committee's comments in that regard.

65. In reply to the question put by the representative of the Bahamas concerning paragraph IV.8 of the Advisory Committee's report, he said that the paragraph was based on information provided by the Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development. He would ascertain whether the statement that specific comments on the programme of work of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development had been made in the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission for Social Development had been based on the reports of those bodies or on information provided by the Under-Secretary-General.

66. **Mr. Repasch** (United States of America) said he understood that when the General Assembly adopted a resolution on the proposed reform measures, there might be many changes to consider. However, in the specific cases of Habitat and UNEP, not only the Advisory Committee but also the Office of Internal Oversight Services and the Board of Auditors had referred to the problem of top-heaviness. Therefore, it would have been appropriate for the Advisory Committee to supplement its comments with fully costed recommendations. The Fifth Committee needed the Advisory Committee's help not so much in identifying problems as in devising solutions, and he hoped that, in future, the Advisory Committee's comments would be followed up with specific recommendations.

67. **Ms. Brennen-Haylock** (Bahamas) said that she had presided over the Commission on the Status of Women, but did not recall having reviewed the programme of work of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development for the biennium 1998-1999. She awaited clarification of the point she had raised concerning the focal point for women; in the past, that post had been financed under the regular budget. She was not satisfied with the reply to the question concerning the D-2 post which was to be redeployed. The Division for the Advancement of Women and the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General had separate responsibilities. The Assistant-Secretary-General post had been established in response to a recommendation made at the Fourth World Conference on Women. However, that post was insufficient to deal with the expanded functions and workload of the Division for the Advancement of Women. The D-2 post should therefore be retained.

68. **Mr. Halbwachs** (Controller) said, in reply to the representative of the Bahamas, that the Commission on the Status of Women had taken note of the programme of work of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development for 1998-1999 at its 15th meeting, held on 21 March 1997.

Section 16. Economic and social development in Africa

Section 16A. Regional commission

Section 16B. Regional Commissions New York Office

Section 17. Economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific

Section 18. Economic development in Europe

Section 19. Economic and social development in Latin America and the Caribbean

Section 20. Economic and social development in Western Asia

Section 21. Regular programme of technical cooperation

69. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) introducing the report of the Advisory Committee on sections 16 to 21 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 (A/52/7 (Chap. II, Part V)), said that the total amount proposed for those sections, which concerned regional cooperation for development, was $399.4 million; the breakdown of that amount by section was given in paragraph V.1 of the Advisory Committee's report.

70. The report consisted of two parts. Paragraphs V.4 to V.12 contained a summary of some issues which were common to all of the regional commissions. The first such issue concerned the lack of uniformity in the presentation of support activities in the budgets of the regional commissions, some of which included a number of substantive activities under the heading of programme support, while others included only traditional support functions. The Advisory Committee recommended (para. V.4) that the regional commissions should address the issue in their next budget submissions; otherwise, the lack of

consistency would continue to give a distorted view of the manner in which resources were allocated.

71. In paragraph V.5, the Advisory Committee noted the need to refine the methodology for indicating the percentage distribution of resources in the programmes of work of the regional commissions. Moreover, the administrative and financial implications of the actions of intergovernmental bodies should be specified more clearly in the Secretary-General's report on the budget. The Advisory Committee commended the efforts of the regional commissions, particularly the Economic Commission for Africa, to streamline their intergovernmental and subsidiary machinery and secretariat structures. The financial implications of those efforts should be reflected in the Secretary-General's budget proposal.

72. With respect to publications, the action taken by the regional commissions was insufficient. Further efforts should be made, in accordance with the guidelines put forward by the Advisory Committee and endorsed by the General Assembly in connection with the programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997. In paragraph V.8 of its report, the Advisory Committee noted the trend towards significantly increasing resources for consultants and experts in the regional commissions. The additional resources had been requested in order to give the Executive Secretaries greater flexibility in implementing the programme of work. However, the cost-effectiveness of that procedure should be monitored.

73. The relevant budget sections contained lengthy descriptions of the coordination, cooperation and liaison responsibilities of the regional commissions but did not indicate clearly what activities were to be carried out for that purpose or how much they would cost. In paragraph V.10, the Advisory Committee recommended that the description of those functions should be significantly improved to give Member States a clear picture of how they related and contributed to other quantifiable and/or identifiable mandated activities.

74. The second part of the Advisory Committee's report dealt separately with each of the budget sections, giving more details on the basic issues identified in paragraphs V.4 to V.12.

75. **Mr. Chinvanno** (Thailand), Vice-Chairman of the Committee for Programme and Coordination, said that the conclusions and recommendations of CPC on budget sections 16 to 20 were to be found, respectively, in paragraphs 193, 200, 205, 212 and 216 of its report (A/52/16). The Committee recommended that the General Assembly should approve the programme narrative of each of those sections except section 19, to which it proposed a modification. In paragraph 223, it made the same recommendation with regard to section 21, subject to the incorporation of a proposed modification. Moreover, in paragraph 224, it recommended that the General Assembly should request the Secretary-General to implement fully the recommendation of the Advisory Committee in paragraph V.46 of its report on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997 (A/50/7), which had called for the strengthening of the monitoring, evaluation and control of the resources used in the regular programme of technical cooperation.

76. **Mr. Saguier Caballero** (Paraguay), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, referring to section 19, reaffirmed the importance of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in assisting the economic and social development efforts of the Latin American and Caribbean countries. Thanks to the accomplishments of the outgoing Executive Secretary, ECLAC was a model for the rest of the regional commissions.

77. International financial institutions classified the Latin American and Caribbean countries in the low- or middle-income categories. Regional institutions that supported economic development and reform must therefore be strengthened. ECLAC promoted economic and social development in the region by engaging in interactive cooperation with its member States in analysing development, designing public policies and facilitating their implementation through operational activities, especially in the areas of specialized information, advisory services, training and support for regional and international cooperation.

78. The reform process had begun at ECLAC long before the current system-wide reform effort. He hoped to receive more information on the pilot management scheme, which was the subject of ongoing deliberations at ECLAC.

79. In general, the Rio Group supported the Secretary-General's proposals and the recommendations of CPC concerning the resources to be allocated to ECLAC. However, it was seriously concerned about the indication, in paragraph 40 of document A/C.5/51/53, that staff reductions in the current biennium had resulted in the cancellation of a number of reports and studies intended to be used as a basis for the development of policies and programmes, particularly in the areas of natural resources and energy, economic and social planning, international trade, environment, human settlements and statistics and economic projections. The already tight budget had also

affected the conduct of research and analyses on issues of concern to the States of the region. He asked whether the activities which had not been implemented during the current biennium had been included in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999; if not, the proposed allocations might need to be revised.

80. ECLAC continued to play a vital role in consolidating peace in the region by strengthening democracies through its support for economic growth and by promoting regional integration. Since its main activity was the publication of reports to support the efforts of Governments, the proposed level of staffing resources was fully justified. ECLAC was the only regional commission whose conference facilities were limited; that fact should be borne in mind when determining the Organization's future priorities, once its financial situation had been placed on a sound footing.

81. **Ms. Aragon** (Philippines), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), reaffirmed their support for the multifaceted role of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). There was an urgent need to strengthen the role of the regional commissions in operational activities, especially technical assistance and advisory services. Resources should be decentralized from Headquarters departments to the regional commissions so that the programmes of action adopted at global conferences could be implemented according to the needs of the countries in the various regions.

82. As noted in paragraph V.40 of the Advisory Committee's report, ESCAP had approved the proposed programme of work at its most recent session. It had also reviewed its conference structure and decided to reduce the number and duration of intergovernmental meetings. It was currently preparing recommendations concerning a revised programme structure; in that connection, ASEAN welcomed the Executive Secretary's initiative regarding the reorganization of the ESCAP secretariat.

83. ASEAN also welcomed the Commission's efforts to achieve a unified system-wide approach to regional development through the Regional Inter-Agency Committee for Asia and the Pacific and its subcommittees (A/52/6/Rev.1, para. 17.4). It supported the overall level of resources proposed by the Secretary-General and the recommendation contained in paragraph 200 of the report of CPC (A/52/16).

84. **Mr. Chinvanno** (Thailand) said that, for 50 years, ESCAP had served well the needs of its 60 members and associate members, which included developed, newly industrialized, developing, least developed, landlocked and island developing countries, as well as countries with economies in transition. Sixty per cent of the world's population lived in those countries.

85. While developing countries in the Asia-Pacific region had made notable progress in the past decade, many countries and areas were still marginalized from the integration process. ESCAP had a key role to play in helping to spread throughout the region the economic and social dynamism which characterized some countries of the region. At the Commission's most recent session, its members had recommended that it should continue to provide policy guidance to help developing countries deal with the challenges and opportunities arising from globalization and liberalization, and had recognized the need for continued cooperation in critical areas to narrow the development gap in the region.

86. The reform of the Commission's conference structure should result in wider participation by its members and associate members and sharpen the focus of its work, thereby enhancing its effectiveness and efficiency. His delegation endorsed the proposed programme of work contained in section 17 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999; in particular, it welcomed the proposed 3.4-per-cent increase in resources for the programme of work.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.